



Council

Budget Meeting Supplement 1

Town Hall
Wallasey

29 February, 2012

Dear Councillor

Attached are additional papers for the meeting of the Council to be held at **6.15 pm on Thursday, 1 March 2012** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, which should be read in conjunction with the Council Summons dated 22 February, 2012:

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AGENDA

5. MATTERS FOR NOTING (Pages 1 - 2)

Proposed amendment to Budget Council procedure (attached).

6. MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL

6a COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13 (Pages 3 – 22)

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 21 February are attached.

6c CHANGING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS - PROPOSAL TO RETURN TO A COMMITTEE SYSTEM (Pages 23 – 38)

The Council will consider a report from the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, on a proposal to return to a Committee system of governance (attached).

8. MATTERS FOR DEBATE (Pages 39 - 56)

Pursuant to Standing Order 5(2)(n), and in accordance with Standing Order 5(4), to consider written comments, objections or amendments to minutes submitted under Standing Order 7(2) and 13.

Proposed amendments submitted by the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrat Group are attached.

In accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Director of Finance will submit (separately) a written report on each set of proposals, giving his view on their robustness.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. M.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

Labour Amendment to Budget Procedure

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Council notes that:

- A budget proposal was voted on unanimously by ten Cabinet members on February 13th and constitutionally referred to Budget Council on March 1st.
- Following a change of administration the same proposal was revoked by Cabinet on February 21st and an alternative proposal put forward with just four votes in favour.
- In order for the original proposal to be heard, even though it was constitutionally referred direct to Budget Council, the Monitoring Officer has ruled that it has to be re-submitted as an amendment to the second budget proposal.
- This relegation to the status of an amendment then allows the budget procedure agreed by Cabinet on February 21st to treat the Conservative proposal put forward at Cabinet on February 21st as the standing minute which will not require a vote if the amendments fall.
- This is despite the fact that the Conservatives are not the largest party, and could be outvoted by the largest party if the Liberal Democrats continued their policy of abstention.

Council does not believe this budget procedure was designed to deal with a situation where there are two formal and legal budgets, both constitutionally referred to Budget Council by a properly constituted Cabinet.

It therefore withdraws this procedure in favour of a vote to be taken on each budget with the budget remaining after others have fallen also subject to the confirmation of a majority vote.

Right of reply: Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

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CABINET

Tuesday, 21 February 2012

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Green (Chair)	Finance and Best Value and Social Care and Inclusion
	Councillors	T Harney S Clarke L Rennie D Mitchell I Lewis	Corporate Resources Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Culture, Tourism and Leisure Streetscene and Transport Services Community and Customer Engagement
		Vacant Portfolios	Environment Housing and Community Safety Regeneration and Planning Strategy

311 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

312 URGENT BUSINESS

Councillor J Green informed that he intended to raise an item of urgent business as the last item of business at this meeting. This was in relation to a number of issues he had raised, at the Special Council meeting, the previous evening. He would report further to the Cabinet and ask officers to start work to progress them.

313 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meetings held on 12 January and 2 February 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

314 DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor Green announced that the Deputy Leader of the Council was Councillor L Rennie.

315 THE 2012/13 BUDGET AGREED BY THE CABINET ON 13 FEBRUARY 2012

RESOLVED:

That the 2012/13 Budget proposals agreed by the Cabinet, under urgent business, at its Special meeting held on 13 February 2012 be rescinded (Minute

No. 310 refers) and therefore, they will not go forward to the Budget Council meeting, scheduled for 1 March 2012, for consideration.

316 SCHOOLS' BUDGET 2012/13

The Acting Director of Children's Services presented proposals set out within Wirral Estimates 2012/13 (The Blue Book) recommending approval of the Schools' Budget for 2012/13 of £179,089,400 for maintained schools and £49,335,300 for the anticipated number of academies. In addition a transfer to the Schools' Budget of two areas from Children and Young Peoples' Budget, (Private Finance Initiative and Planned Maintenance) totalling £2,745,100 was proposed. The report included some minor changes to the Schools and Early Years Funding Formulae. Reports on these areas had been presented to the Schools Forum on 24 January 2012.

RESOLVED taking account of the Schools Forum: That

- (1) the DSG funded Schools Budget for maintained schools be approved at the sum of £179,089,400;**
- (2) the headroom of £250,700 be allocated within the formula to all schools;**
- (3) £200,000 of PPM included in the Schools Budget be funded from Dedicated Schools Grant;**
- (4) the contributions to combined budgets be approved;**
- (5) the changes to the School Funding Formula and the Early Years Single Funding Formula be agreed;**
- (6) a Special School Funding Trigger be applied to deal with surplus places in four Special Schools.**

317 COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/2013

The Cabinet considered a report and appendix by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance that formed part of the financial planning process providing Members with the information on which to consider the Council's Budget for 2012/13. The appendix to the report set out the draft revenue estimates for 2012/13. A decision was required to enable recommendations to be made to the Council concerning the budget and Council Tax for 2012/13.

Councillor J Green in moving the Cabinet's Budget Proposal for 2012/13 (seconded by Councillor L Rennie) reported as follows:

"The budget presented to cabinet this evening is designed to enable the new Council Administration to take the urgent action required to address the crisis of confidence local people have in this Authority.

It will enable us to tackle the urgent concerns regarding the Council's ability to **protect** our most vulnerable residents and put us on the path to providing high quality services that are designed and delivered according to the wishes and needs of our communities.

Given the time we have had available we have accepted the budgetary assumptions made by the previous Administration (after all they have had nine months to examine the books). However we absolutely reject the Labour administrations decision to axe in excess of £1 million From the Day Services budget for 2013/14.

We will act to put right the injustices identified in the Anna Klonowski report. We will pay back in full all those who were overcharged back to 1997. We will reinstate Martin Morton if that is what he wishes, and we will ensure all who need to be held accountable for those dreadful failings are dealt with.

We believe the Council exists to **serve** local people not to tell them what we think is best for them and we have placed this principle at the heart of this budget.

Residents across Wirral are making careful decisions about their household budgets and monthly outgoings. To support them the Government has announced funding that has enabled us to freeze their Council Tax. In addition, when consulted, local people said that a cut in Council Tax was a clear priority for them. Therefore today we are announcing:

A rebate equivalent to a 3% cut in the Council Tax. With a commitment to work in future years to make this permanent

An extension of the current council tax relief scheme for the over 75s scheme to over 70s households

And for all households who pay via direct debit, provide the opportunity to spread their payments across twelve rather than ten months.

Combined with this year's freeze and rebate over 70s households in Band B with a Direct Debit will pay £36.94 less each month.

As a result of sticking to our fundamental principle that people rather than Council's know how to spend their own money best it has allowed us to inject an additional £4 million into local businesses and Wirral's economy as residents have more money to spend locally. We will continue to strive to rebalance our local economy for the benefit of families' right across Wirral.

Cutting the cost of Council administration

It has never been more important to ensure that local tax payers' money is invested wisely when we spend tax payers money we should treat it as if it were coming from our own pockets. We have as a matter of urgency reviewed all reserves and departmental budgets for further savings opportunities. We regret that the austerity measures introduced last year have not been taken forward by the previous administration and therefore intend to act now to ensure waste is reduced in order that the money spent on Council bureaucracy can be directed to the services where it is needed the most.

By taking the difficult decisions necessary in our last budget we have ensured that further staff reductions are not required. This enables us to redirect staffing levels to

the front line services that serve the public, keep young people and vulnerable adults safe.

We currently spend around £123 million on our pay bill. It is important that we ensure this is invested wisely and savings are made wherever possible. We are therefore putting in place arrangements for improved management of staff turnover. This measure will reduce our staffing bill by 2%.

We will review the Council's current facilities agreement with the Trade Unions with the aim of continuing reasonable paid facility time for trade union duties while aiming to reduce the amount we spend on full time Trade Union Officials. For the next twelve months we will fund this activity from the Council's efficiency budget and conduct a full review to ensure Wirral's Trades Unions can effectively represent their members if the payment for full time officers is withdrawn.

Management of staff turnover	£2, 470,000
Strategic Change Programme	£2, 060,000
Council Trade Union contribution	£270,000
Efficiency Investment Budget reduction	£2, 500,000
Austerity measures including supplies	£74,000

The Strategic Change programme delivered £10.725 million of efficiencies last year. We are disappointed that little progress has been made during the current year to ensure the Strategic Change Programme delivers the necessary savings required in the future and instructs the Director of Finance to bring forward an early report on how this will be addressed.

To ensure the required rigor and all parties have an opportunity to contribute to the work of the Strategic Change Programme we will establish the Strategic Change Board on an all party basis and chaired by the Leader of the Council.

Your FAMILY: Services for Children and Young People

In last year's budget we stated:

'Wirral is home to almost 78,000 children and young people. It is a good place to grow up and most children and young people will fulfil the aspirations that we, their parents and their carers have for them. However, some children and young people experience real disadvantage, poverty, hardship and failure to achieve the results they should in School. Our work will continue to be targeted at seeking to ensure that all of our young people grow up in safety and have the best possible start in life.'

We remain true to this pledge and welcome the Government's decision to award the Council an additional **£569,000** in Early Intervention Grant which will enable us to provide all disadvantaged two year olds with fifteen hours of free early education from September 2013.

We will also target resources to ensure our children are safe and have access to the opportunities they deserve.

- Early Intervention and Child Protection **£1 million**

We believe that as a Council we have no more important duty than to protect the lives of vulnerable children and the £1 million we are announcing today will fund into a range of measures for 2012/13 to keep Wirral children safe and enhance our front line children's services. This will include the crucial role School's play as part of the 'team around the child'. A new pilot to employ an experienced social worker to work with a cluster of schools to ensure intervention takes place at the earliest stage possible.

Caring for our most vulnerable children

- We are committed to tackling inter generational child poverty in Wirral, and congratulate the 'Roots and Wings' group for the work they have completed to develop our strategy. We will now make a significant investment to deliver on this work.
- We believe that the Roots & Wings group made up, as it is, of Voluntary, Community and Faith Group representatives is best placed to determine and prioritise where investments should be made to best effect in local communities. **£ 400, 000**
- To ensure support is targeted towards children requiring extra help we will work with Frank Field MP and Cambridge University to ensure accurate information is available allowing resources to be prioritised on those most in need via a better understanding of 'school readiness' **£100,000**
- We will continue our successful investment into every Sure Start Centre that enables our dedicated staff to offer even more opportunities for the children and families they serve for a second year. This will include an additional £2,000 grant for every Centre in 2012/13 to buy new equipment and offer families the opportunity to enjoy day trips and outings. **£38,000**
- Residents who provide foster care opportunities for children to be brought up in a safe and caring environment deserve all the support we can provide. We are therefore ensuring that foster care allowances are increased in line with national recommendations. **£160, 000**
- We particularly welcome the Governments recommendation that the friends and family who step in to foster a child in need should also receive assistance. **£450,000**
- Wirral Council is the 'parent' to around 680 Looked After Children who are in our care. Many receive valuable support and assistance from their peers on the Children in Care Council. We congratulate them for the work they have undertaken this year utilizing last years budget provision and award them a further grant to continue this activity. **£20,000**
- We will encourage Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations to provide placements for 100 young people who are not in employment,

education or training. This will provide valuable experience, raise confidence and work readiness with the longer term aim of gaining employment.

£220, 000

- We will also extend the successful coaching and mentoring programme for young people who are at risk through sport. The programme will increase their aspirations and provide them with the guidance, skills, qualifications and confidence needed to access job opportunities

£50,000

Your FAMILY: Adult Social Services

The Council's services for Vulnerable Adults needs to be improved. Never again must the safeguarding of vulnerable people be put at risk by thoughtless budget cuts. We will therefore reverse the previous administrations proposed cut of over £1 million from day services for 2013/14.

- We welcome the Government's additional grant for adults with learning disabilities. **£170, 000**
- We will invest to improve the range and quality of our Adult Social Services. **£1.5 million**
- We will invest to improve standards in safeguarding practices **£500,000**
- While options are considered we are providing additional funding this year to maintain Fernleigh **£500,000**

Keeping people in good health

The transfer of public health responsibilities to the Council and the establishment of our health and wellbeing board provides the opportunity to strengthen cross-sector working between the Council, the NHS and the voluntary sector to reduce inequalities, increase efficiency and improve health outcomes.

Keeping people in good health means that we need to go beyond provision of separate services and single-issues, and look at providing an integrated response and model of support in our communities. The approach recommended is to assess what services we have currently supporting different parts of the borough, to assess how those services can work more closely together and to develop a model where we can ensure that people can get the support they need as easily and simply as possible. They are likely to include services for supporting people on healthy lifestyles, self-care and independent living, families and early years, work, learning and skills, health protection and personal safety, community development and leisure and welfare.

This would enable those commissioning and providing services to offer a holistic and systematic offer of support to all those who could benefit from it. We will also identify areas of Wirral where we can implement this in the first instance so that we can evaluate the benefits before rolling out more widely.

This work has been identified as a work stream for the Health & Wellbeing Board, and will initially be supported by place-based leadership funding from the National Leadership Council.

- No one deserves our support more than the men and women who have served their country in the Armed Forces. We congratulate all the volunteers and Council staff who have been involved in the Veterans Unit which signpost members of the armed forces, their families and local veterans to a range of support service and allocate further resources for 2012/13 to support this vital work. **£10,000**

Your NEIGHBOURHOOD

The most important influence on residents overall quality of life is the house and street where they live. Last year we made budget provision to enable a major consultation to take place to enable local people to say what really matters to them in their street.

We will ensure that all suggestions and concerns from that consultation are proactively taken forward by Council Officers and are acted upon. More importantly we will delegate additional resources to Area Forums to for them to invest in their Neighbourhoods as they wish. **£500, 000**

Investing in the people's priorities

In addition to the budget provision made last year:

- A budget of **£30,000** allocated to each Area Forum to invest as residents choose .
- An additional **£10,000** per Area Forum to spend as they wish on a range of pavement improvements, drop kerbs and potholes.
- An additional **£4,000** per Area Forum to spend as they wish for the clean up of children's play areas -
- Residents have told us that fly tipping continues to be a blight on local neighbourhoods. It is local people who are best informed about where these problems are and we are allocating resources that can be directed by our Area Forums to target as they see fit. -

£5,000 per forum

Our libraries are about more than books. They are a vital part of what makes Wirral special and are at the heart of our communities.

- We will reappoint a 'Libraries Champion' to work with the Reader Organisation (chaired by Sue Charteris) to oversee work on a new library model based on delivering soft social care, education and community development. This will be carried out in partnership with the Director of Public Health and piloted at one library with the aim of replicating it across the entire library network.
- In addition we will ensure that the 'Get into reading' project continues through investing a further year's funding in this important project prioritising those who have mental health needs. **£100,000**

- The active and enthusiastic Allotment Associations around Wirral are an important part of our local neighbourhoods. We therefore make a further fund available this year to spend as they wish. **£ 50,000**
- We will make a further investment in our waste infrastructure while ensuring that that the review of the waste contract is prioritized to ensure maximum value for money. **£677, 000**

In addition:

- The cleanliness and safety of Wirral's neighbourhoods makes an enormous difference to the lives of local people. We will double the size of the dog fouling enforcement team and ensure, directed by our Area Forums, they take a more proactive approach. **£120, 000**
- Anti-social behaviour was again identified as a key concern to Wirral residents and it is vital that we provide the most effective action possible. We are disappointed that the full review of this activity requested was not undertaken this year and provide funding from the Council's Efficiency Fund for a further twelve months to ensure that this now takes place. This work must identify how resources can be targeted in the most effective and efficient way taking full regard of the wishes of local communities. **£290, 000**
- There has been a failure to implement the requested 20 mph zones in residential areas. We therefore bring forward the past two years funding to ensure the scheme is implemented as a matter of urgency. **£550, 000**

Your ECONOMY

Wirral's economy faces many challenges. However, we also have assets across the Borough that, with Government support, will enable us to rebalance our economy and take advantage of new markets and opportunities. The Governments announcement of the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone and the securing of international investment will finally begin to make a real difference to the lives of local people.

We will give priority to supporting our small businesses and making Wirral a place where business chooses to invest and create jobs. We will seek to achieve a rebalanced economy that retains and attracts our young people and provides opportunity for all to realise their full potential. We will also continue to ensure that every young person leaving school has access to training or a job; work that will include today's announcement of £220,000 to create work experience opportunities in the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector.

- We will invest in Wirral's Green economy through a pilot project to ensure local businesses benefit fully from the opportunities presented by this crucial sector, particularly those in local green sector businesses who are already grasping this opportunity. This will deliver extra training, up skilling, and apprentices to enable people moving into the sector, including the unemployed to access appropriate training opportunities in Wirral. There will also be a major marketing event to promote Wirral's green sector businesses

and job opportunities. These budget recommendations have come forth from a detailed scrutiny review of the sector. **£500,000**

- Helping to ensure our local shopping areas remain vibrant is something we commenced last year through the introduction of an Empty Shops Fund, alongside the 'free after three' and the 'big clean up' initiatives. This year, we want to build upon that and provide funds for local Trader groups to bid in to with suggestions of what they would propose to do to improve the vitality of their shopping areas. We would expect the bids that are supported to demonstrate how local trader groups will come together and contribute their time and/or resources to the bids successful outcome. This process will work alongside and compliment any successful bids into the Coalition Government's Mary Portas pilots. **£500,000**
- To encourage local people to shop in Wirral all car parking from Monday through to Friday will continue to be 'free after three' for another twelve months. **£400,000**
- Continuing to support local business to thrive and grow is vital in order to rebalance Wirral's economy. Over the last five years the Council has assisted in safeguarding and creating almost 6000 jobs and supported almost £100 million of private sector investment. We will continue to provide dedicated business support and advice to all who have the potential to grow, helping them to identify new business opportunities and access new markets.

We will continue to support Wirral businesses by providing assistance through specialist advice, grants and the Wirral Business Angels programme and further develop and enhance the business workshops delivered through Invest Wirral.

Last year's budget made significant investments in to helping people into work. This year we will again continue to invest in the successful Wirral Apprentice Programme that has already helped 313 young people into jobs. To build on this success we will continue to invest in our successful programmes: The Reach Out consortia has already assisted 759 people into work. This successful initiative is planned to end in May 2012, but we believe that its continuation is crucial as we seek to drive down the number of residents who are out of work. Unlike other Councils we delivered this activity through voluntary, community and faith sector groups to maximize their experience and links to our communities and hardest to reach groups an approach we are pledged to continue. We therefore instruct the Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning to bring forward a report detailing how this work will be tendered to ensure no gap in delivery. In addition we will continue to invest in additional apprentices, training and grants to businesses that will increase employment and help to rebalance our local economy.

£1.5 million

Investing in community assets

The New Brighton Development is becoming established as a key leisure asset for the local community and has potential to attract even more investment from the

private sector. We will invest **£1.2 million** this year to enhance the quality of the environment around it, such as pavements, street lighting and car parking.

The Open Golf Championship attracted significant investment to Wirral and showcased what our beautiful peninsula has to offer. We will invest a further **£1.2 million** to ensure that Hoylake becomes a fantastic gateway for visitors including the creation of a new town square.

We believe that it is important to prioritise investments that will make a difference to the lives of local people and help to generate investments and jobs. We will therefore fund these projects through the re-phasing of capital work on Council Offices.

Your COUNCIL

This Council must change. We must end the corrosive and insular culture that has led to the loss of confidence and respect in this Council from our staff and residents. In the future we must be guided by clear values based on what makes us unique as professionals who work with integrity.

For this Administration this will mean all of us (Council staff and politicians) at all times demonstrating:

1. **Unity** - Trusting and supporting each other, we work as one team to protect and serve the people of Wirral. We sustain strong relationships based on tolerance and mutual cooperation
2. **Integrity** - We act consistently, with honesty and transparency. Everything we do must stand the test of public scrutiny
3. **Understanding**- We listen, we are considerate and show respect to colleagues, customers and the communities around us
4. **Excellence** - We strive to achieve the highest standards, confidently using our professional expertise in the work we do
5. **Responsibility** - We accept responsibility and accountability for what we do. We take ownership for our actions and work together to achieve them

These are not just a set of words. They form a contract between this Administration, within teams, Directorates and Wirral as a whole. We should aim to demonstrate the values in our day to day work, to colleagues and customers. We need to feel safe to challenge if we feel our values are not being followed. And we need to recognise and reward people where we do see these values in action.

We will ensure our business is conducted in the most transparent manner possible involving as many Council Members as possible. We today instruct the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to bring forward at the earliest possible opportunity a report detailing how this Council will return to the Committee System to ensure that decision making rests in the hands of the many not the few.

We must also ensure that the wishes of Council Members are implemented properly and that performance management is given greater prominence than has hitherto been the case. We believe that Members must play a leadership role in this and so we are instructing the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to establish a new

all Party Business Delivery Board to support the Cabinet by detailed oversight of progress on our Corporate Plan.

We will ensure this Council is in the future focussed upon serving and protecting local people. In particular those who are most vulnerable and in need. This Council must do this through the engagement and empowerment of individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services, and by working together with partners in the public, private and the community, voluntary and faith and independent sectors. We therefore instruct the Chief Executive to bring forward proposals to change the Council's Policy Framework to ensure that lawful consultation and engagement are central to all budget and decision making processes in the future.

Our staff are those who are best placed to point out where we are failing and to tell us how we can improve the services that we will deliver. We are therefore investing to ensure we listen and properly engage with them in the future:

- We will appoint an independent ombudsman to ensure that staff are able to raise any issues of concern they wish in the future without fear of reprisal. **£45, 000**
- We will invest to improve standards and practice across the Council. **£300, 000**
- To ensure we consult all our staff fully on their views we will conduct an independent survey **£ 12, 000**
- We recognise the importance of leading by example as an employer and we will again make provision for a payment of £250 for our lower paid workers – those earning under a full time equivalent of £21, 000. **£600, 000**
- We will now implement the Liberal Democrat proposal that was rejected last year that in future the Council will set an example by paying a living wage to all our staff. **£30,000**
- We welcome the proposed new General Advice Contract that will provide a free and independent information and advice service open to all Wirral residents but specifically targeted towards meeting the needs of families living in poverty. The service will be responsive to those in greatest need, providing a package of information, advice and support in relation to welfare and benefits, debt and financial management, employment and housing. **£260, 000**
- We also recognise the importance of the contribution the Council can make through our One Stop Shop services to provide a range of financial advice services to residents. We instruct the Director of Finance to bring back an urgent report regarding how this is delivered to include how staff can advise on fuel tariffs and how to ensure everyone is assisted to open bank accounts to improve financial inclusion in the borough.

In addition it be noted that this budget is achievable, sustainable and increases the Council's balances by £2.75 million over the minimum requirement to assist in the challenges for future years.

Any requirement of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 to consider reports be dispensed with on the grounds that, in the opinion of the Council, the matters are urgent.

That for the financial year 2012/13 the Council will ensure that no pensioner household over 70 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, excluding the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

- (i) the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 70 or over on 1 April 2012 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2012 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);
- (ii) this reduction will be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;
- (iii) application must be made for the reduction where it is not currently in payment or the potential claimant is not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit;

No pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Benefit will qualify for the reduction.

It be noted that, at its meeting on 8 December 2011 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2012/13 as 106,058 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, under Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the 'Act').

The following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2012/13 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act.

- (a) £818,279,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act;
- (b) £685,368,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
- (c) £132,911,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year.
- (d) £1,253.20 being the amount at (c) divided by the Council Tax Base, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

Wirral Services Valuation Bands

A	£835.47	B	£974.71	C	£1,113.96	D	£1,253.20
E	£1,531.69	F	£1,810.18	G	£2,088.67	H	£2,506.40

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings in Valuation Band D, calculated in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings as listed in different valuation bands.

It is noted that this equates to 0% Wirral Council Tax rise.

It be noted that for the year 2012/13 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts of precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Fire Valuation Bands

A	£44.91	B	£52.39	C	£59.88	D	£67.36
E	£82.33	F	£97.30	G	£112.27	H	£134.72

Police Valuation Bands

A	£100.41	B	£117.14	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.23

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts for Wirral services and the Fire and Police precepts, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of council tax for the year 2012/13 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

Wirral Council Valuation Bands

A	£980.79	B	£1,144.24	C	£1,307.72	D	£1,471.18
E	£1,798.11	F	£2,125.04	G	£2,451.97	H	£2,942.35

It is noted that this equates to a 0.48% overall increase in Council Tax."

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET PROPOSAL 21 FEBRUARY 2012

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES

BASE ESTIMATE 2011/12	CURRENT ESTIMATE 2011/12	BASE ESTIMATE 2012/13	
£	£	£	
EXPENDITURE			
Departmental budgets	266,426,900	273,337,000	264,389,500
Merseytravel 28,817,000	28,817,000	29,060,000	
Local Pay Review	956,300	545,900	545,900
Contribution to Fund EVR/VS Scheme	5,794,700	0	0
EVR / VS Scheme 2012 Savings	0	0	(910,000)
Net budget 301,994,900	302,699,900	293,085,400	
Potential Overspends	0	2,000,000	0
Council Tax Reimbursement	0	0	4,000,000
Contribution from Balances	(7,165,900)	(9,688,300)	(9,604,500)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	294,829,000	295,011,600	287,480,900
INCOME			
Revenue Support Grant	37,498,000	37,498,000	(471,100)
National Non Domestic Rate	121,312,000	121,312,000	145,208,200
Council Tax Freeze Grant	3,285,000	3,285,000	6,572,800
Local Support Services Grant	0	1,482,600	1,804,900
Council Tax Income	131,434,000	131,434,000	132,911,000
Collection Fund Surplus	1,300,000	0	1,455,100
TOTAL INCOME	294,829,000	295,011,600	287,480,900
STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE			
General Balance at 1 April	14,070,600	14,070,600	18,405,300
Adjustment (following 2010/11 outturn)	0	1,000,000	0
Contribution from Capitalisation	0	2,600,000	0
Budgeted Contribution	(7,165,900)	(9,688,300)	(9,604,500)
Release of Housing Benefit Reserves	0	5,000,000	0
Release of Other Reserves and Provisions	0	5,423,000	0
GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH	6,904,700	18,405,300	8,800,800

Councillor J Green placed on record his sincere thanks to the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance for his assistance in helping to find the additional savings to put the Budget together. He also thanked the Head of Financial Services and the entire Chief Officer team, who had been keen and enthusiastic to work together on the 2012/13 Council Budget.

Councillor J Green informed that each Chief Officer must do all they could to control expenditure within their departments and must also work collectively together to achieve the Budget overall

RESOLVED: (4 for, 0 against and 2 abstentions)

- (1) the Council's Budget for 2012/13 as set out above be agreed and recommended to Council; and**
- (2) following the agreement of the Budget for 2012/13 a report be presented to the Cabinet updating the future financial projections to further support the Council in planning over the medium term.**

318 **COMMITTEE REFERRAL TO BUDGET CABINET - EARLY INTERVENTION GRANT**

The Cabinet considered a referral from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of the Early Intervention Grant (Minute No. 50 refers).

The Committee at its meeting held on 26 January 2012 had resolved: That

“This Committee endorses the widely held view that early intervention works and praises the work of our Sure Start Children's Centres and the many other projects which are funded by the Early Intervention Grant and do so much for Wirral's families and young people.

Therefore, this Committee records its concern at the proposal to remove £1 million from the Early Intervention Grant. We are unconvinced that the removal of £1 million from this grant will not have a detrimental impact on those families who are reliant on the services which this grant funds and on the life chances of the children who benefit from these services. We ask Cabinet to think again.

It was further moved by Councillor Hayes and seconded by Councillor Povall and –

Resolved – That this Committee continues to scrutinise the Acting Director of Children's Services over the coming year.”

RESOLVED:

That the referral above from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and accepted.

319 **BALANCE SHEET MANAGEMENT - REVIEW OF BALANCES INCLUDING GENERAL PROVISIONS AND RESERVES**

A report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance contained the mid-year review of the amounts held in balances, provisions and reserves. It was recommended that the release of those provisions and reserves which were no longer required to the General Fund balance.

The Cabinet was aware accepted good practice to regularly review the level of reserves and provisions. Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Director of Finance to comment on the adequacy of the General Fund balance and reserves in the setting of the annual budget.

During the financial year Departments had indicated that they would be seeking to use available provisions and reserves to help meet the financial pressures. As these sums were released to the General Fund balance authorisation was needed to confirm that the balance could be used in this way.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) having regard to the risks involved, £5,423,000 be returned to General Fund Balance;**
- (2) £14.5 million of provisions and £21.4 million of reserves be used to fund expenditure in 2011/12;**
- (3) £333,000 of the balances arising from the release of Children and Young People Department reserves be used to offset the projected overspend within the Children and Young People Department in 2011/12; and**
- (4) £140,000 of the balances arising from the release of Regeneration, Housing and Planning Department reserves be used to fund the Working Wirral project in 2011/12.**

320 **BENEFITS BUDGET, PROVISION AND RESERVE**

A report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance set out the Benefits budget for 2012/13 and reviewed the provision and the reserve.

The Cabinet noted that Housing Benefit spend was the largest individual heading within the Council Budget. It was advised of any changes which impact upon this whilst the budgets, including sums set aside in provisions and reserves, were kept under review to ensure that sums no longer required were released to General Fund balances.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the budget for 2012/13 be agreed;**
- (2) the saving in 2012/13 of £1.2 million from implementing the lean review be agreed; and**

- (3) **the release of £3 million of the Housing Benefit provision and £2 million of the Housing Benefit reserve to General Fund balances be agreed.**

321 STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME

A report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance provided an update on the Strategic Change Programme (SCP) for 2011/12 and recommended a schedule of projects for the next three years.

The report also provided an outline of the major projects that the Change Team would be addressing during 2012.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Strategic Change Programme be agreed.

322 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2012/2015

A report by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance set out the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2012-2015 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2012-2015 be approved;
- (2) the Prudential Indicators be adopted;
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision policy be approved; and
- (4) the Council Officers listed within Appendix E, of the Strategy Statement be authorised to approve payments from Council bank accounts for all treasury management activities.

323 BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE

A report by Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reminded Members that Standing Order No.13 provided that he

“shall, prior to the Budget meeting of the Council, consult with the Leaders of each political group and submit to the Cabinet and Council a suggested procedure to be adopted at the budget meeting, but if no such procedure is adopted the normal procedures of the Council in relation to amendments to Cabinet recommendations will apply”.

The Director reported that the Budget meeting clearly was different from ordinary meetings and therefore the procedure that was proposed was based largely on that used since 2008, the relevant sections of the Constitution, and one or two suggestions made in the light of comments made in previous years. It was set out in

the appendix to the report. The Director advised that the reference in the appendix to the date of this Cabinet meeting needed to be amended to today's date.

The Director informed that any alternative budget proposals must be lodged with him by 12 noon on 27 February 2012.

RESOLVED:

That the Budget Council procedure be approved with the amendment reported by the Director.

324 **CARBON BUDGET 2012/2013**

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management advised Members of the corporate and departmental progress made against the Carbon Budget 2011/12 (Appendix A); the revisions that were required to meet Corporate Goals; and, provide the Carbon Budget for 2012/13.

Members had requested that a Carbon Budget be established (Council 14 December 2009, Minute No. 77 refers). The resolution included instructions to:

- establish the Council's carbon footprint and quantify tonnes of CO₂ emitted as a direct result of Council operations for 2010 onwards;
- prepare carbon budgets detailing emissions and efficiency targets for each department to be presented at Budget Cabinet and Council alongside the Council's financial budget; and,
- report to Cabinet on progress being made by departments against their carbon target and the measures and projects being undertaken to reduce energy use and carbon emissions.

Appendix A to the report set out the Carbon Budget Performance Table for the Council's buildings. The Carbon Budget Impact Statement (Appendix B) summarised the measures and projects aimed at reducing carbon emissions.

Progress against the actions requested by Members at the Cabinet meeting on 21 February 2011 (Minute No. 331 refers) was also included in the report. The Carbon Budget process would be further developed in light of anticipated changes to the mandatory Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRCEES) and organisational needs.

The Carbon Budget was not a statutory requirement but is Wirral's only method of managing CO₂ emissions in order to comply with the Corporate Objective to 'reduce our carbon footprint' and the CRCEES.

The carbon budget was not financial but meeting the annual targets would have an impact on costs. Reductions in carbon emissions were achieved by reducing energy use and there were financial savings that would be made from the avoided costs of energy and CRCEES allowances.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress towards the 2011/12 target included in Appendix A to the report be noted;
- (2) the Carbon Budget for 2012/13 included in Appendix A be approved;
- (3) the actions described in Appendix B be noted and endorsed; and
- (4) the current Carbon Budget method be applied until April 2013 and that a further report detailing recommended alterations as a result of the review of the Carbon Budget process together with Carbon Budget targets for 2013/14 be presented to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

325 **URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR - ISSUES RAISED AT THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING ON 20 FEBRUARY 2012**

Councillor J Green referred to the debate that had taken place the previous evening in the Special council meeting. At this meeting Councillor Green had indicated a number of issues that he intended to take forward. Therefore, he reported as follows in order to get the process by providing officers with the governance needed to start taking necessary actions:

“We will resolve to back-date from 1997 – 2000 to those vulnerable adults with learning disabilities who were unlawfully financially abused by this Council as we have always maintained that this is the right and proper thing to do.

We will also engage with the immediate families of those overcharged service users to compensate for the stress, upset and worry that they have been subjected to throughout this saga while fighting for justice for their loved ones.

We will engage an independent, external ombudsman to allow Council employees, who may feel that their concerns were ignored in the past, to raise any matter that they wish to without fear of reprisals.

We have asked the Head of Service for HR and Organisational Development to produce an early report concerning all the matters and associated issues that allowed two senior officers of the Council to leave under compromise agreements with Council Taxpayers money in their pockets less than one working day before the Council received the Anna Klonowski Associates (AKA) report.

We have asked the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to undertake further work with a view to releasing an un-redacted copy of the AKA report.

We have requested a report from the Head of Internal Audit that explains exactly when internal audit became aware of the issues of overcharging vulnerable adults, who Internal Audit reported this to and what exactly was done about it.

We are seeking urgent meetings with Ministers to discuss the current situation concerning the AKA report and to ask for their support in the calling of a public inquiry to investigate all associated matters thoroughly.

Work will also begin so that Mr Martin Morton can become an employee of this Council again if he wants to.”

RESOLVED:

That the actions set out above for officers to take be agreed.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL

1 MARCH 2012

SUBJECT:	CHANGING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – PROPOSAL TO RETURN TO THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 required all local authorities with a population of 85,000 or more, including Wirral, to change their governance arrangements from a committee system to 'executive arrangements'. The Act allowed three options for executive arrangements: a council leader and cabinet model; a mayor and cabinet model; and a mayor and council manager model. Wirral opted for the leader and cabinet model.
- 1.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 required borough councils operating executive arrangements to change to one of two models of governance: either a strong leader and cabinet model; or a directly elected mayor and cabinet model. The Council had to consult local residents and other interested parties on the two options. Then, after public consultation and by 31 December 2010, the Council passed a resolution to change to a new form of executive arrangements. Consequently, in May 2011 Wirral moved to a strong leader and cabinet governance model.
- 1.3 The Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. It provides greater choice as to the form of governance that councils may adopt. In particular, the Localism Act allows Wirral the option of adopting a committee system of governance.
- 1.4 Reintroducing a committee system will involve all Member decisions being made by committees made up of councillors from all parties to reflect the political balance of the authority.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Prior to 2000, decisions in Wirral, in line with all other English local authorities, were taken by committees. These committees were governed by the Local Government Act 1972 and had power delegated to them directly from the Council. They also generally had power to arrange for the discharge of their functions through sub-committees or officers. They were required to be politically proportionate. This means that seats on committees and sub-committees had to be allocated to each political group in the

same proportion to the number of seats held by each of those groups on the Full Council.

- 2.2 The Local Government Act 2000 gave effect to the then Government's plans to change the way that local authorities made decisions. The central feature of the new system was a division between Council functions and executive functions. In general terms, the Council set the Budget and approved the authority's Policy Framework. The Council, through traditional, proportionate committees, also had responsibility for regulatory functions (planning and licensing); audit and risk management; and standards. The Executive (or Cabinet at Wirral), would make executive decisions, provided these were in accordance with the Policy Framework and not contrary to the Budget approved by Council. Non-executive elected members would scrutinise those decisions at proportionate Scrutiny committees. The 2000 Act also required councils to set up standards committees, to ensure high standards of conduct, and created the Standards Board for England.
- 2.3 The stated aim of separating the roles of executive and non-executive elected Members was to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability. The Government gave large local authorities like Wirral three alternative decision-making models: a directly-elected mayor and cabinet model; a leader and cabinet model; or a directly elected mayor and council manager model. Where Councils held a referendum to adopt an elected mayor and the referendum result was not in favour of a mayoral system, authorities could adopt 'alternative arrangements' as a fall back position. It was under this fall back rule that Brighton and Hove City Council, uniquely for a unitary authority with over 85,000 residents, continued to operate an 'enhanced committee system' until forced to move to executive arrangements in 2011. Brighton and Hove City Council is responsible for a similar wide range of functions to Wirral and is in the advanced stages of reverting to a committee model of governance, with effect from May 2012.
- 2.4 In response to the Local Government Act 2000, Wirral changed its governance arrangements from a committee system to a 'leader and cabinet' executive model.
- 2.5 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 required councils with over 85,000 residents to adopt one of only two models of executive arrangements: either a strong leader and cabinet model; or a directly elected mayor and cabinet model. The Council had to consult local residents and other interested parties on the two options. Then, after public consultation and by 31 December 2010, the Council passed a resolution to change to a new form of executive arrangements. Consequently, in May 2011 Wirral moved to a strong leader and cabinet governance model.
- 2.6 The Localism and Decentralisation Bill, published in December 2010, offered the prospect for the Council to return to the committee system; and Members followed the Bill's passage through Parliament with growing interest. The Bill became the Localism Act 2011, which received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011. It provides greater choice as to the form of governance that councils may adopt. In particular, the Localism Act allows Wirral the option of adopting a committee system of governance. This report sets out the options and timescales available for changing the Council's governance arrangements.

3.0 WIRRAL COUNCIL'S ASPIRATIONS AND PREPARATIONS FOR A RETURN TO THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

3.1 The Council, at its meeting on 14 February 2011, considered a Notice of Motion entitled 'Democratic Reform and Localism'. Council resolved:

'That

(1) Council welcomes the measures in the Localism and Decentralisation Bill, published on 13th December 2010 that will:

- Involve people more closely in the workings of their communities
- Diversify the way services are provided
- Reduce the interference of central government in local and community matters

(2) Council particularly welcomes the amendment of Pt 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, giving the flexibility for local authorities to propose their own preferred governance structures.

(3) Council notes that the partnership agreement between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups commits the current administration to consideration of how a committee system might be re-introduced and to enhancing the role of all elected members of the Council and seeking mechanisms that will allow the delegation of significant amounts of executive authority to members.

(4) Council also notes the commitment of the current Conservative and Liberal Democrat administration to embedding processes which engage the public in the Council's decision making.

(5) Council further notes the establishment and work of the Council's Localism Commission under the leadership of Councillor Kelly, preparing the way for a substantial devolution of functions and budgets to local neighbourhoods.

(6) Council believes that steps should be taken now to prepare for a move towards a modernised committee structure, creating a more democratic council with the opportunity for all Councillors to be involved in making real decisions on matters that affect their residents, and being held accountable for them.

(7) Therefore, in anticipation of the Localism Bill being given Royal Assent, Council instructs the Director of Law HR and Asset Management to immediately begin holding and facilitating discussions between the three party leaders to develop a new governance model for Wirral, within existing resources, to be ready to come into operation at the earliest opportunity within the 2011/12 municipal year once the relevant legislation is in place.'

(Minute No. 89 refers.) This was carried by 41 votes to 22.

3.2 The Council, at its meeting on 17 October 2011, resolved:

‘That

Council further asks, in line with the Notice of Motion previously passed by all parties, and in line with pending legislation, that an all party working party comprising two members of each party be set up to seek to achieve consensus on the most appropriate form of democracy within the Council, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses both of the old Committee system and the current Cabinet system, and of any legislation and subsequent regulations as these become known.

Council asks that any new system meeting all party approval be prepared ready for adoption at the Council’s AGM, in May 2012 or as soon thereafter that the enactment of the Localism Bill and any subsequent regulations allow.

Council recognises that this is a separate issue from the need to strengthen Corporate Governance in the Council, but believes that a successful outcome would, none the less, contribute to a less antagonistic and more co-operative form of politics, building on the individual strengths of each member.’

(Minute No. 51 refers.) This was carried by 37 votes to 26.

3.3 At the Budget Cabinet meeting held on 20 February 2012, when proposing the Council’s 2012/13 Budget, the Leader of the Council stated that:

“We will ensure our business is conducted in the most transparent manner possible involving as many Council Members as possible. We today instruct the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to bring forward at the earliest possible opportunity a report detailing how this Council will return to the Committee System to ensure that decision making rests in the hands of the many not the few.”

(Minute No. 137 refers.)

4.0 THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

4.1 The Localism Act includes provisions to enable councils to choose to revert to a committee system at their annual meeting. The Act specifies that, in order to change from a cabinet system to a committee system, local authorities must:

- pass a resolution to change their governance arrangements;
- as soon as practicable after passing the resolution, make the provisions of the new arrangements available for inspection; and
- publish in one or more newspapers circulating in the area, a notice which describes the features of the new system and timescales for implementation.

- 4.2 Having passed a resolution and complied with the publicity requirements above, authorities are required to cease operating their old form of governance arrangements and start operating their new arrangements. This must take place “at the relevant change time” which, in the case of a move from a cabinet system to a committee system, is defined as:
- (a) the first annual meeting of the local authority to be held after the resolution to make the change in governance arrangements is passed; or
 - (b) a later annual meeting of the local authority specified in that resolution.
- 4.3 This means that the range of governance models available to Wirral Council now includes that of a committee system. If a majority of elected Members wish the Council may legally introduce a committee model of governance at the Annual Council meeting on 14 May 2012, or at a later Annual Council meeting.
- 4.4 The Localism Act also specifies that if a council passes a resolution to change its governance arrangements, it may not pass another resolution to change from one form of governance to another (e.g. from a committee system back to a leader and cabinet model of governance) for five years, unless a referendum is held on the issue and a majority of those electors voting support the proposed change.

Permitted forms of Governance under the Act

- 4.5 Under the Act, the governance models available to councils in terms of decision making structures are:
- (a) A leader and cabinet executive;
 - (b) A mayor and cabinet executive;
 - (c) A committee system; and
 - (d) Other arrangements approved by the Secretary of State.
- 4.6 The Secretary of State has power to approve alternative forms of governance arrangements on request from local authorities. However, this power is conditional upon the Secretary of State being satisfied that the alternative form of governance proposed would: (a) be an improvement on the current arrangements; (b) ensure efficient, transparent and accountable decision making; and (c) be appropriate for all local authorities, or a particular type of local authority. Obtaining the Secretary of State’s approval to an alternative form of governance, specifically for Wirral, would be likely to involve many months’ work.

Overview and Scrutiny

- 4.7 The Act is clear that a local authority with committee based governance arrangements may appoint one or more overview and scrutiny committee or committees. However, there are specific legal requirements to review and scrutinise the following areas:
- Flood risk management functions;

- Health (including scrutinising the work of the Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust, which provides mental health services, learning disability services and drug and alcohol services across the whole of Cheshire and Wirral. This work is carried out by a joint committee); and
- Crime and disorder.

Accordingly, under a committee model of governance there will still need to be at least one scrutiny committee.

- 4.8 The Government shortly plans to lay in Parliament regulations defining the operation of overview and scrutiny in committee system authorities. The Centre for Public Scrutiny expects that these will be, for all intents and purposes, identical for the provisions on overview and scrutiny for 'leader and cabinet' authorities. In addition, the Localism Act has increased the powers of scrutiny committees to include powers to scrutinise partners.
- 4.9 Based on the above indications from Government and the Council's previous arrangements, officers expect that in any new committee system there will be a retained element of the current overview and scrutiny system. Under a committee system this might be streamlined, perhaps focussing on the above statutory scrutiny functions and task and finish scrutiny reviews and/or policy development reviews in response to referrals from service committees. However, the indications referred to in the preceding paragraph suggest that it may be difficult to achieve a reduction in the number of overview and scrutiny committees (and overview and scrutiny meetings). This will make it very difficult to support a committee model of governance within the existing resources of Committee Services.

Standards

- 4.10 The Localism Act requires authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted members of the authority. This includes a requirement to adopt a code of conduct. This code must be consistent with 'Nolan Principles' of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The code is also required to cover the disclosure of pecuniary and non pecuniary interests.
- 4.11 Local authorities are required to have in place arrangements under which allegations of breaches of the code of conduct can be investigated and decisions on allegations are made. These arrangements must include the appointment of at least one 'independent person'. The Localism Act has been drafted in such a way that no such 'independent person' may have been a member or co-opted member of the authority in the last five years. This precludes all the current Independent members of the Council's present Standards Committee from undertaking this role. Whether this outcome was actually intended by parliament or is merely the result of poor parliamentary draughtsmanship is not clear.
- 4.12 The Localism Act provides for the abolition of Standards for England. Accordingly, councils are to be required to deal with their investigations and decisions internally.

4.13 Members will be very aware of recent criticisms of the Council's corporate governance arrangements. Accordingly, it is recommended that if Members are minded to move to a new, committee system of governance the opportunity is taken to adopt a new Constitution which embraces best practice in relation to corporate governance, including standards. The Standards Committee has set up a Working Party on 1 March to consider the Council's response to the changed regime under the Localism Act.

5.0 DEMOCRACY WORKING PARTY

5.1 As a result of this Council's resolutions (reported in Section 3 of this report), a Democracy Working Party has been established with the following terms of reference:

'To achieve consensus on the most appropriate decision making structure within the Council, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses both of the old Committee system and the current Cabinet system, and of any legislation and subsequent regulations as these become known.

To agree key principles and values to become part of the new decision making structure; and

To report back with recommendations to the Cabinet and the Council.'

5.2 The Democracy Working Party has already met five times and is making good progress.

Meeting Date	Items of business that were considered by the Democracy Working Party
15 Nov 2011	The Working Party agreed its Terms of Reference. It received an update on the Localism Bill 2011. It agreed its Work Programme.
1 Dec 2011	The Working Party received a report on the Localism Act 2011 and considered in detail the Council's previous Committee Structure.
10 Jan 2012	The Working Party agreed a number of values to be used as a framework against which to measure any proposals. It also gave detailed consideration to the strengths and weaknesses of the strong leader and cabinet and committee system governance arrangements.
18 Jan 2012	The Working Party drew up a list of questions for a Survey on Governance Arrangements which it conducted. Questionnaires were sent to all Members and the Executive Team with a tight deadline for responses.

9 Feb 2012	<p>The Working Party considered the findings of the Survey on Governance Arrangements. There was a 79% response rate.</p> <p>It also considered Corporate Governance Key Line of Enquiry 6 – Committee Services referrals on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timing and duration of Council and Committee Meetings; • Number of Reports being presented to Meetings; and • The rules of debate (which it deferred to its next meeting.) <p>It discussed Brighton and Hove City Council's proposed return to a Committee System and its arrangements to bring this about, including the timetable that could allow new governance arrangements to commence from its Annual Council meeting in May 2012.</p>
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- 5.3 The Working Party, as part of its work, has already carried out a survey of all Members of the Council and the Executive Team. The clear outcome of this survey is that, in principle, the model of governance most preferred is a Committee System.
- 5.4 Consequently, officers, at the request of the Working Party, have made contact with officers at Brighton and Hove City Council. Officers are discussing Brighton and Hove's Constitutional Change Work Programme with a view to sharing its best practice and providing a discussion paper, as soon as practically possible, which will be discussed at the Working Party's next meeting, scheduled for 14 March 2012.
- 5.5 The discussion paper will set out a proposed outline of a Committee System for Wirral, along with a rigid timeline to move to the new style of governance. An initial view or basic model will be put forward by officers and the values put forward by the Democracy Working Party and agreed by the three Political Groups, must be reflected therein. This paper will also include exactly what has to be done and what must be put in place if a Committee System is to be the model of governance in use in Wirral from the beginning of the 2012/13 Municipal Year.
- 5.6 The Head of Democratic Services at Brighton and Hove City Council, Mark Wall, has kindly agreed to visit Wirral on 14 March 2012. He will spend the full day at Wallasey Town Hall meeting with Members and officers. He will discuss his Council's proposed new governance arrangements and share his Council's views as to best practice. Mr Wall will also attend the Democracy Working Party meeting at 4pm to make a presentation on what a move back to the Committee System involves and the timetable required etc. Mr Wall has also agreed to provide Members with an overview of Brighton and Hove's new Constitution and a copy of the Constitution in its entirety.

6.0 PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPING A NEW CONSTITUTION

- 6.1 If the Council instructs officers to proceed with Constitutional change, the timeline for approval could be as follows:

Constitutional Change Work Programme		
Meeting/activity	Date	Purpose
Council	1 March 2012	<p>Resolution that, in principle, the Council is minded to move to a Committee System with effect from the Annual Meeting in May 2012.</p> <p>Authorisation to officers to undertake and commission the necessary preparatory work for preparing a new Constitution, including codes and protocols.</p>
Democracy Working Party	14 March 2012 and other meeting dates to be agreed	<p>Update following 1 March 2012 Council meeting and information on future process.</p> <p>Share Brighton and Hove City Council's best practice, including its new Constitution.</p> <p>Agreement of timetable and process to be followed.</p> <p>Input into arrangements and the drafting of the Constitution which will be recommended for adoption to the Council, after consultation with Group Leaders.</p> <p>Consideration of draft Constitution, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles of the Constitution; • Responsibility for Functions; • Overview and Scrutiny; • Standards; • Codes and Protocols; and • Rules of procedure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Remuneration Panel – proposed Scheme of Members' Allowances. • Consider any outstanding issues and any final recommendations to Council.
Council	16 April 2012 (or a later Special Council meeting)	Formal resolution under the Localism Act 2012 that the Council adopt a committee model of governance with effect from the Annual Meeting in May 2012.

		Publication of proposals, as required by the Localism Act. Place a notice in local newspapers which describes the features of the new system and timescales for implementation.
Annual Council	14 May 2012	The Council allocates committee places in line with the proportions of the political groups as represented on the authority following the May 2012 Local Government Election.

6.2 This is a very challenging timetable. It will require a significant time commitment from both Members and officers if this challenge is to be met successfully. It is proposed that the Democracy Working Party, liaising with the political Groups, continues to meet for the purpose of moving this initiative forward within the timescale indicated. The Working Party will consider the emerging new Constitution and ensure the Council is in a position to introduce its new governance arrangements from the Annual Council meeting in May 2012.

6.3 A possible committee structure is attached at Appendix 1. Members' views are sought as to whether they are satisfied that this should form the initial outline structure for a new Constitution to support a Committee model of governance; and inform a review of members' Allowances by the Independent Remuneration Panel (see below).

7.0 ADOPTING A COMMITTEE SYSTEM – ISSUES TO CONSIDER

7.1 The decision as to whether or not to return to a committee system is a decision for the Council. The Council has in the past indicated its support for such a move. In considering the arrangements further, there are a number of potential issues that Members need to consider:

- **Restrictions on future changes to other governance models.** Once a resolution is passed to change the Council's model of governance, there are restrictions on making further changes within five years. The Council will not be able to change from a committee system to a leader and cabinet system; a mayoral system; or a system approved by the Secretary of State, for five years unless a referendum is held. However, it is possible to review and amend the new governance system at any time, without the need for a referendum, provided the overall model of decision making (a committee system) is retained.
- **Resources.** External legal advice will be required to deliver a new constitution in such a tight timescale. Officers are obtaining estimates for the cost of this work, but it is likely to run into tens of thousands of pounds. In addition, there are will be ongoing costs to support a committee system. These may be higher than those of supporting an executive system, depending on the number of committees, the frequency of their meetings and the level of officer delegation. There will also be a need for considerable officer and Member time to be spent in preparing for and implementing a new system of governance.

- **Timing.** If the Council agrees to move to a committee system from the Annual Council meeting in May 2012, this will mean that there is very little time to design a new system. It will effectively require the Council to purchase a constitution from external solicitors, or to adopt a system very similar to that of a Council who is further ahead than Wirral, in terms of implementation. In practice, this latter option is likely to be Brighton and Hove City Council. However, as indicated above, the Council can make revisions to the details of a committee model of governance at a later stage.
- **Preparing the organisation.** Operating under a committee system is a very different model of decision making compared with executive arrangements. Decisions are taken at all-party committees and this will require the organisation to review how it engages with and supports Members. New arrangements will need to be implemented which adequately support Members to operate effectively under the committee system. This will need to happen very quickly to meet a May 2012 timetable.
- **The wishes of Members.** On the other hand, as evidenced by previous resolutions, there appears to be considerable Member support to changing the governance arrangements to a committee system.

Members' Allowances

- 7.2 Operating under a committee system will mean that the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) will need to review the new arrangements and make proposals for changes to Members Allowances. The role of chair of a committee is significantly different to that of a Cabinet Member. Based on the Council's previous committee arrangements, it is possible that there will be more decision making meetings taking place, but possibly with more chairs as compared to the number of Cabinet Members. This means the IRP would be likely to propose changes to the current allowances scheme to align with roles and responsibilities under a committee system. However, it is worth noting that there is a requirement to review the Scheme of Members' Allowances after four years, which is in 2012. The IRP did meet during 2011, but in the light of this it considered that only essential changes should be made prior to the full review taking place this year.
- 7.3 If the Council resolves, in principle, that it is minded to change its governance arrangements, and there is a degree of consensus on the number of and remit of committees, it is suggested that, the IRP should commence a review with a view to progressing its work and reporting to the same meeting of Council that adopts the new arrangements, if at all possible.

Calendar of Meetings

- 7.4 It is recommended that the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to prepare and circulate to Members a draft alternative Calendar of meetings based on the indicative committee structure as set out in Appendix 1 to this report. It is proposed to follow the existing pattern of meetings for Regulatory committees, principal committees to meet five times a year as an initial arrangement.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

8.1 Risks and opportunities relating to any change to decision making arrangements will be considered and planned for using the council's approved risk management methodology. A risk register will be drafted immediately to guide the implementation.

9.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 If the Council decides not to revert to a Committee System it can continue with its current governance arrangements, the Strong Leader and Cabinet model. Alternatively, Members may wish to consider the option of a hybrid arrangement, as permitted under the Localism Act, subject to Secretary of State approval. As indicated, this model would not be likely to be in place for May 2012.

10.0 CONSULTATION

10.1 A Member/Chief Officer survey has already been carried out with a 79% return rate. The findings were that 70% of those who responded to the survey said they would prefer the Council to have a Committee model of governance.

10.2 As the proposals for new decision-making arrangements are developed, the relationship of the Committees with the Local Strategic Partnership and other partnerships will need to be considered and addressed.

10.3 The Localism Act does not require the Council to consult with local people on a proposal to move to a different form of governance. However, as indicated, once a council changes its form of governance, it may not do so again within five years without the endorsement of a referendum.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

11.1 None

12.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

12.1 The Council's new Constitution will need to be drafted without delay. This work is urgent as the Democracy Working Party and the political groups will need to be consulted on the new Constitution during early April 2012, prior to it being formally adopted by the Council at its Meeting on 16 April 2012 (or a later Special Council meeting in April 2012).

12.2 There is limited officer capacity available to expedite the work required on the new Constitution. Officers in Legal and Member Services will be required to undertake significant amounts of work on the forthcoming local government election and imminent round of school appeals (which must be heard within 30 school days of being lodged). Accordingly, enquiries are being made with private sector solicitors to support the preparation of a new Constitution.

12.3 There will be costs associated with the work that must be carried out by the IRP to produce a new Scheme of Members' Allowances. The Chair of the Panel is the only Panel Member who will receive payment for the work, but all Panel Members will receive payment for out-of-pocket expenses. The total cost of convening the Panel is expected to be in the region of £3000.

12.4 Based upon previous arrangements, servicing a committee system may require an increase on democratic support because of the increase in the number of meetings that is likely. This may be offset by changes to overview and scrutiny arrangements but that will depend on the model of overview and scrutiny that is adopted. In addition printing costs are also likely to increase.

13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 These are incorporated into the body of the report.

14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

No.

15.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are implications associated with any increase in meetings as a result of new governance arrangements e.g. heating, lighting, extra journeys made by Members' attending more meetings at the Town Hall. There may be an increase in the number of agendas printed, paper, ink and electricity used.

16.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 None.

17.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that:

17.1 The Council resolves that it is minded, in principle, to change its governance arrangements from that of a Leader and Cabinet model to a committee system with effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2012; and based initially on the indicative committee structure set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

17.2 The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to prepare and/or commission the preparation of a new Constitution for the Council to enable the authority to move to a committee model of governance with effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2012; with the costs of any external legal advice to be met from Balances.

17.3 The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to bring the proposals for a new Constitution to the Democracy Working Party for urgent consideration and then refer them to the Council in April 2012 for consideration and, if appropriate, approval.

17.4 The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to arrange for Members and officers to receive appropriate, briefings and training in preparation for a move to a committee model of governance in May 2012.

17.5 The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to prepare and circulate to members a draft alternative Calendar of meetings based on the indicative committee structure as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

17.6 The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to convene the Independent Remuneration Panel to review the new arrangements and make proposals to Council for changes to Members' Allowances. This review shall be based initially on the indicative committee structure as set out in Appendix 1 to this report; with the costs of the review to be met from Balances.

18.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

18.1 To ensure that all necessary work is in hand so that the Council has arrangements in place and a new Constitution if it resolves to return to a Committee System model of governance at its Meeting 16 April 2012.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - A possible committee structure for Wirral Council.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

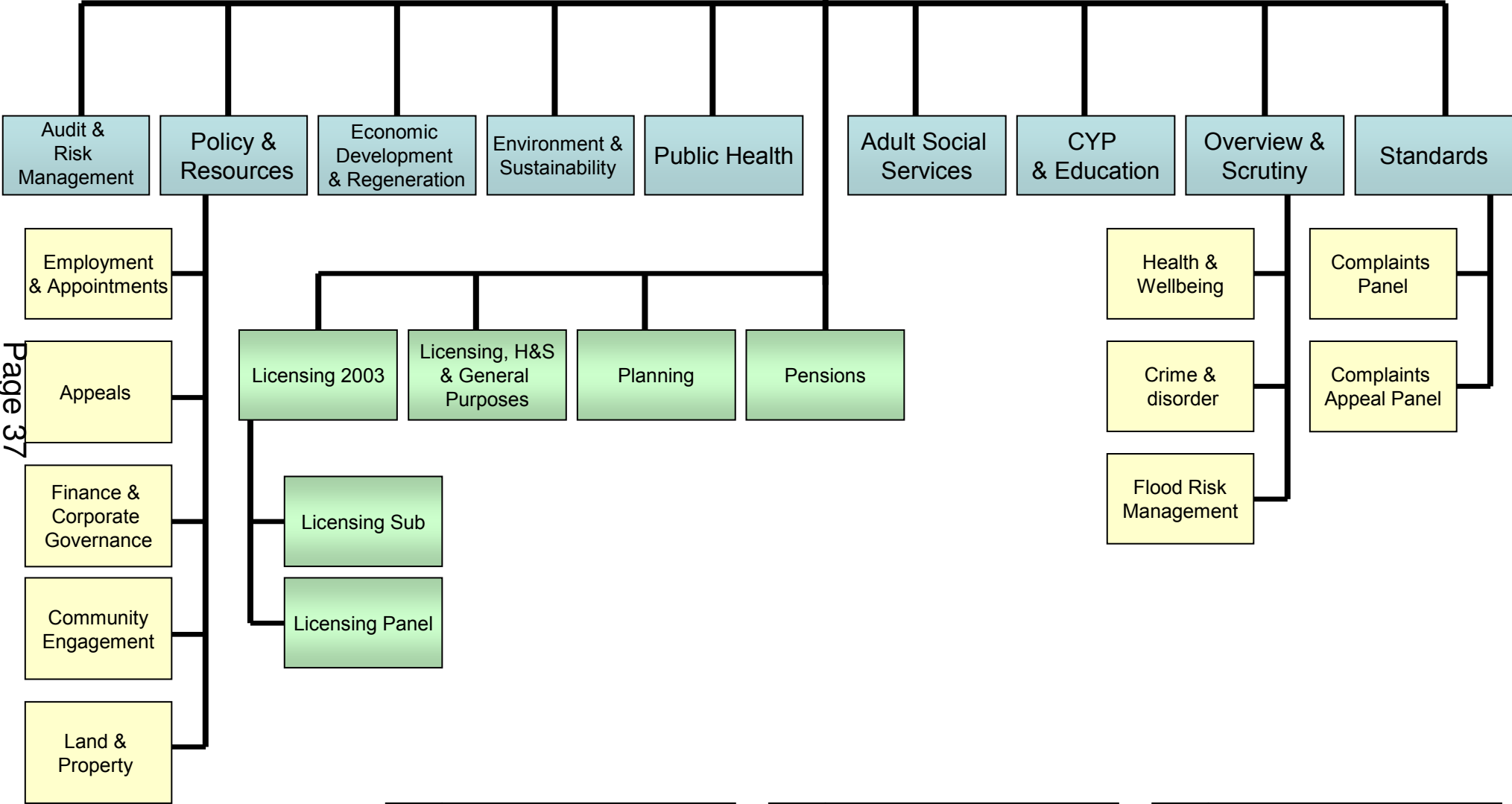
SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Council	14 February 2011
Council	17 October 2011
Budget Cabinet	20 March 2012
Democracy Working Party	15 November and 1 December 2011, 10 and 18 January, and 9 February 2012

APPENDIX 1

WIRRAL COUNCIL

Urgency



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Committees

Sub-Committees

Regulatory Committees

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LABOUR BUDGET AMENDMENT 2012/13

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (15 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (5 minutes)

This Budget, proposed unanimously by all ten Cabinet members on February 13th, deletes and replaces the Conservative Budget scrapped together in less than a fortnight and proposed at Cabinet on February 21st by just four votes.

It has been amended only to include the precepts and to fulfil the pledge in the original budget to meet the cost of those precepts and set an overall Zero Council Tax increase, and to clarify one or two items which were already in the budget.

In so doing, it cuts Wirral's Council Tax by 0.6%.

This budget remains unamended because we firmly believe that this is the right budget for Wirral. It is a well planned and carefully thought out budget, without gimmicks, which prepares the Council for future challenges and provides the resources necessary to see it through the rough times ahead and make a positive difference to Wirral residents.

1. Building hope for the future

A budget to tackle poverty and improve the life chances of Wirral residents.

This has been a turbulent year for Wirral. We started with unprecedented financial cuts, announced by government very late in the day, and the loss of 1200 staff, a fifth of the Council's workforce. We have had to spend time stabilising and restructuring services to make sure they continue to be delivered with far fewer people available to do so. We have had to make up shortfalls in the 2011/12 budget as the consequences of some decisions became more apparent and we have had to work hard to contain potential overspends as Departments struggled to manage on the more limited resources available.

We have also had to face some unpalatable home truths about the culture of the Council and serious failings both in Corporate Governance and in the protection of vulnerable adults, for which there is no acceptable excuse. A further critical report from the District Auditor on the handling of a Highways contract is expected very shortly and, again, there will be serious lessons to be learnt.

In 2012 we face a review of Local Government Finance which may radically affect the resources available to Wirral in 2013, and this review will be taking place in the context that we are already projecting a £78m shortfall in resources for 2013-2015. In these circumstances it is vitally important that we do nothing that could damage the Council in the future and that the budget we set is a sustainable one with a sensible base expenditure that is adequate to provide good future services for the people of Wirral in the years ahead, so we do not add to the very difficult times ahead.

It is also important that we manage scarce resources wisely and to that end we are focussing on providing an evidence base for decisions we take and, where that does not exist, to ensuring that action is taken to collect the necessary evidence through pilot schemes or other methods.

We are looking to move towards the prevention of problems, rather than simply reacting to them at a later date when they are fully developed and we are investing in research which will help identify the best way of doing this in a number of areas.

It is also important that we take on board any criticisms that have been made, and take the opportunity of this budget to direct additional resources into areas that need them and which will strengthen the position of the Council in the future so past mistakes are not repeated.

At the heart of this budget is the need to tackle poverty and deprivation on Wirral. The Vision for Wirral set out in the original draft Corporate Plan is an ambitious vision which seeks to create a healthy and prosperous Wirral with a sense of well being that permeates all levels of our society.

Crucially, this Vision seeks to reduce dramatically the mortality gap which means that in the poorest areas of the borough you are likely to die ten years earlier than your counterpart in the richest areas of the borough, and if you are a man up to fifteen years earlier. The move to locate Public Health in Local Authorities provides a very real opportunity to tackle this scandalous inequality.

This Budget will be supporting Wirral's Investment Strategy and investing money to provide more jobs in the borough, and help support the long term unemployed back into work.

It will be supporting Wirral's Child Poverty Action strategy, and it will focus on the early years of a child's life which evidence shows are crucial in determining whether or not the cycle of poverty and deprivation will be repeated.

It will be looking at additional ways to improve safeguarding for adults and children.

It will be looking at ways to increase the wellbeing of individuals and to make their neighbourhoods safer, cleaner and healthier.

It will be listening to what residents have said they want in their Neighbourhood Plans.

It will be taking account of the analysed response to the You Choose Budget Simulator, where residents had the opportunity to set their own budget, and where the number of responses received in Wirral topped the charts in the country, coming second only to the original pilot authority.

2. 0.6% cut in Wirral Council Tax levels. Overall Zero Increase in Council Tax Levels including precepts.

At a time when RPI inflation is running at 3.9%, the overall Council Tax, including precepts, will be set at a Zero Increase in recognition of the financial difficulties faced by many families in a time of recession. Residents have been clear in their responses that they do not want to see an increase in Council Tax at this time.

We have chosen to absorb the cost of the increase of the police and fire precept, in recognition of the importance to Wirral residents of proper levels of policing and of fire protection. These have been funded from balances which we previously left available for this purpose. The remainder has been absorbed by the increase in the Council's Tax Base in 2012/13.

This means that there is actually a cut in Wirral's Council Tax of 0.6%

Revenue Estimates

The Revenue Estimates for 2012/13, as set out in the Estimates Book submitted to Budget Council, be approved subject to the amendments set out below.

3. Improving Public Health and Tackling Poverty and Deprivation.

Many of the initiatives set out below are linked together in the fight against poverty. In many cases tackling the root cause of problems will also lead to reductions in the kind of problems which can create stress and poor mental health, which in turn affect physical health, and life expectancy.

£

Tackling Unemployment

Extension of Reach out worklessness programme.

The sum of £1m be allocated for one year to continue the successful Reach Out programme to support workless residents into employment, which has included the provision of over 20 weekly work clubs delivered in community locations across Wirral and which by December had already helped 759 people into work, 57 more than its stated target, with five months still to run on the contract.

1,000,000

65 more ILM place

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to the Wirral Intermediate Labour Market programme to fund another 65 places for workless residents who are experiencing a number of barriers to employment, enabling them to compete after 12 months for work in the open labour market, taking the total number of places created to 165.

500,000

33 more apprentices

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to the Wirral Apprentice Programme for 16 to 24 year olds, to fund a further 33 Apprenticeships, bringing the number of apprenticeships secured to date to 346.

500,000

It be noted that in November the rate of reduction in JSA claimants for 18-24year olds had decreased five times faster in Wirral than the national average

Supporting Local Businesses

It be noted that since March 2009 Invest Wirral has assisted in projects which have secured more than 3,000 jobs and investments of around £40m, and that the Marine Point leisure and retail development in New Brighton has brought over 700 new jobs to the area.

Expansion of Wirral's green economy

The sum of £100,000 now be allocated for one year to encourage the expansion of Wirral's green economy, in line with the recommendations produced by the Green Growth Scrutiny Panel. This should include the consideration of a "market place" style event aimed at raising public awareness of the products and services provided by the local green economy, the possibility of developing a data base of all green skills training providers in the North West, working in conjunction with relevant partners in higher education, Connexions and Job Centres and an

100,000

assessment of the possibility of developing a green accreditation scheme similar to the Wirral Trader, again in conjunction with the relevant partners.

Measures to help local traders

The “Free after Three” parking initiative designed to help local traders be continued while research is undertaken to collect concrete evidence on the benefits of this scheme and alternative schemes, looking at retail and town centre needs as a whole, in order to ensure that the money invested reaches those it is designed to help, with the option of re-focussing the investment as necessary to achieve maximum benefit for local traders. The Director of Technical Services is asked to report back to Cabinet within six months on the best way forward. 400,000

Capital Scheme to improve investment in New Brighton

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning is asked to bring to Cabinet the capital scheme to support improvements in street scene and car parking in New Brighton in order to increase the potential for investment in the Marine Point Development, which is currently hindered by the poor quality of its immediate surroundings 1,200,000

Capital scheme in Hoylake to increase attractiveness for Open Golf visitors

The Director is also asked to bring to Cabinet the capital scheme for improvements immediately outside Hoylake Train station, including the creation of a new town square, prior to the return of the Open Golf championships in 2014, in order that both schemes can be accommodated in the current programme as slippage occurs. 1,200,000

Tackling Child Poverty.

24% of children in Wirral are living in poverty, with some areas having much higher concentrations of child poverty, the highest being 72%. These measures are in line with aims expressed in Wirral’s child poverty strategy “Roots and Wings”.

Free early education for disadvantaged two years olds

The sum of £569,000 in government grant be spent in moving towards the goal of providing all disadvantaged two year olds 15 hours of free early education from September 2013. Criteria will be designed to include a range of factors from economic disadvantage to social exclusion and isolation and particular high risk categories. 569,000

Wirral to pilot national approach to improving life chances for children in poverty

Working in partnership with the Public Health Healthy Child programme, the sum of £100,000 be allocated for one year to pay for the costs of research with Cambridge University, arising from the report “The 100,000

Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults” produced by the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances led by Frank Field MP.

This shows that the most important period influencing a child’s future life chances is the time between conception and starting school. The report requested the development of two sets of measures which will assess a child’s cognitive, physical and emotional skills, the first at the age of two to two and a half, and the second measuring school readiness when a child first arrives in the primary school reception class.

This £100,000 will pay for the development of the first set of indicators, when parenting skills are crucial, which will show how effective parental support has been and what is needed to make it more effective. Cambridge University will carry out the research with appropriate teachers and early years foundation workers like Health Visitors on Wirral, where the suggestions for the development of the indicators were first raised.

This means Wirral will know how well their children are developing, and will be able to target, and test, the best means of improving this development.

Wirral will act as a pilot for a potential national approach when the indicators have been devised and tested. The development of the second set of indicators is already funded, and will be carried out in Wirral schools with Teachers and Head Teachers.

Multi-agency project for hard to reach families with multiple and complex problems.

The sum of £100,000 revenue be allocated to the creation of a multi-agency project designed specifically to contact and work with hard to reach families with multiple and complex problems and provide high levels of sustained intervention, providing a holistic package of support. This project to be based around the concepts originally put forward by the Wirral Child Poverty Partnership in a lottery bid, ensuring an integrated rather than overlapping approach, with measurable outcomes and evidence of long term cost benefits.

100,000

Money for looked after children

The sum of £20,000 be allocated for one year to looked after children to provide a range of activities, including residential opportunities and special events, as well as funding the larger Children in Care Council and a special website.

20,000

Increase in foster and adoption fees

The sum of £160,000 be allocated to pay for an increase in foster and adoption fees.

160,000

Extending fostering fees to friends and family

The sum of £450,000 be allocated in order to pay fostering fees to

450,000

friends or family members who take on the responsibility for looking after a child.

Extending range of free food deliveries

The sum of £15,000 be allocated to allow for the leasing and maintenance of a van for Wirral Foodbank to allow them to extend their ability to deliver free food to those most in need. 15,000

Paying a living wage

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated to allow the Council to take a lead in paying all its employees a living wage, in line with recommendations with the Anti-Poverty Strategy to promote the policy of paying a living wage to all employers in the Liverpool City Region 50,000

£250.00 for lower paid workers.

That it be noted that the sum of £600,000 is contained within the base budget to allow a continuation of last year's payment of £250.00 to employees earning under £21,000. 600,000

Improving Access to debt counselling and advice services

The sum of £10,000 be allocated to increase publicity levels around debt counselling and advice services, with Libraries and One Stop Shops acting as the first point of referral, and to refresh the current service to include issues of fuel poverty, with energy efficiency advice, Welfare Benefit advice surrounding the changes in Welfare Benefits and the loss of working family tax credits, and other appropriate services. 10,000

Creating a Pilot Wellness Centre

The sum of £20,000 be allocated to assist in the creation of a pilot "Wellness Centre", in conjunction with Public Health, using a One Stop Shop in an area of high deprivation, which will combine the current One Stop Shop activities with a series of health and lifestyle issues in order to contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of Wirral residents in an integrated way, with consideration being given to the potential for siting this pilot in the Leasowe Millennium Centre. The Director of Public Health be asked to report to Cabinet on the creation of a pilot Wellness Centre, and the Director of Finance to report on the potential for a merged one stop shop/library in the Millennium Centre. 20,000

Improving Adult Mental Health

Crisis and respite care

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to Adult Mental Health Services to continue and develop the current range of mental health services at Fernleigh, taking into account consultations currently taking place. 500,000

Get into reading

The sum of £100,000 be allocated to continue the therapeutic 100,000

programme developed by Get into Reading to build self confidence and reduce exclusion and isolation

Improving Safeguarding

Strengthening management structures in Adult Social Services

In the light of the recommendations in the AKA report, and recommendations made as part of the Self Evaluation and Peer Challenge exercise, to endorse the restructuring in Adult Social Services which strengthens management with a Deputy Director post, and includes the new senior post of Head of Safeguarding and Care Governance. 107,000

Meeting new child protection demands as the impact of the recession affects families

The sum of £100,000 be allocated for the appointment of two temporary posts for Assessment Team Social Workers to cope with the increase in demand which is in danger of leading to overloaded case files and to set up a pilot working with a cluster of primary schools to look at alternate and improved ways of working between schools and Social Care teams. 100,000

That it be noted that the funding for the Family Support Unit which deals with issues of Domestic Violence and abuse is to be continued with the assistance of the Community Fund at the same level as last year.

Meeting Increased Demand in Social Services

That the sum of £1m be allocated to Adult Social Services which will facilitate the commissioning of domiciliary night visiting services, which will reduce pressure elsewhere and support people more effectively in their homes, with the aim of preventing hospital admissions and reduced admissions to residential care. It will also allow further development of the STAR assessment and reablement service to provide 7 day on site cover on discharge from hospital, integrated into co-located teams in community and primary care. 1,000,000

Prioritising Prevention

Early Intervention and Innovation Fund for Council Services

That, in the light of the urgent need to refocus services on prevention and cut the costs of dealing with more intractable problems further down the line, the sum of £2m be used to create an Early Intervention and Innovation Fund specifically to attract new bids from Council Services for programmes where early intervention is likely to reduce costs elsewhere. 2,000,000

Early Intervention and Innovation Fund for the Voluntary Sector.

That the sum of £300,000 be set up to allow members of the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector to bid for similar projects. 300,000

That it be noted that the investment in these two funds is in addition to the £5.5m already in the Efficiency Investment Fund, and that these sums of money are a vital source of investment to allow the Council to change its ways of working in order to meet the severity of the financial changes ahead and to demonstrate its commitment to change.

Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour

Improving anti-social behaviour services.

That the sum of £290,000 be allocated to support the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, and that a wide ranging review take place of related services which cover Community Safety, alcohol harm reduction programmes, the provision of diversionary activities for young people, and other appropriate services in order to ensure the Council is delivering a fully integrated service to Neighbourhoods which have made it quite clear in their individual neighbourhood plans that the reduction of anti-social behaviour is their top priority. The Chief Executive is asked to report back to Cabinet on this review in the course of 2012. 290,000

Provision of sports mobile to increase opportunities for diversionary sporting activities.

That the sum of £25,000 revenue be allocated to the leasing and maintenance of a vehicle and the purchase of lighting and sports equipment to allow mobile sporting activities to take place in the dark as well as daylight., and to increase the number of activity sessions possible. 25,000

Improving the Environment

Preventing fly tipping in urban areas.

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated for one year to a pilot project specifically designed to engage with the community and develop ways of preventing fly tipping in chosen areas of terraced housing, both through enforcement and through understanding the issues that lead to tipping and tackling those at source, with the aim of spreading the lessons learnt across other urban areas in the borough where fly tipping is a problem. 50,000

That a further £20,000 be allocated for high profile signage and use of Mobile CCTV to improve enforcement across all relevant urban areas and a report be brought to Cabinet as soon as possible detailing the operation of the pilot and the wider publicity and enforcement campaign. 20,000

Maintaining inflation on the Biffa Contract pending a review

That the sum of £677,000 be provided for one year to pay for contractual inflation on the Biffa contract, pending a detailed review of the Contract and efficiencies possible. 677,000

Improving Road Safety 20mph zones

That the sum of £285,000 be allocated from the £550,000 20mph reserve to kick start the programme by using conventional traffic calming measures in the three residential areas where there is an accident record. These are Leeswood Rd, Mavis Rd and Woodland Road area in Woodchurch, the Downham Road area in Birkenhead and Earlston Rd and Belgrave Rd area in Wallasey.

285,000

That work is undertaken to consider possible locations for pilot schemes to measure the success of signage without enforcement, with one location being Ladymount Primary School in Pensby where residents have already submitted a substantial petition

That the programme is rephased over another year to allow for the consultation on new guidance on 20mph limits promised by the Government's for 2012 to take place in the hope that they will strengthen the enforcement and signage position to allow for successful 20mph zones to be put in place, with variable time signs as appropriate.

Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance Compliance Unit

That the sum of £250,000 be allocated to the creation of a Corporate Governance Unit, to ensure that measures are put in place to improve Corporate Governance and those measures are monitored and enforced.

250,000

Corporate Governance Solicitor

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated for the appointment of an additional solicitor in legal services, with primary responsibility for Corporate Governance.

50,000

- 5.** That it be noted that the cost of the policy options detailed above will be met from the additions to balances outlined in the reports on Reserves and Provisions, and the report on savings from the Benefits budget and the additional £2.06m identified in the change Programme for 2012/13.

That it be further noted that savings of £5.4m as reported to Cabinet on the 21st February 2012 within the Change Programme for 2013/14 and that those savings will cover the ongoing expenditure without creating any additional requirements in 2013/2014.

6.

Any requirement of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 to consider reports be dispensed with on the grounds that, in the opinion of the Council, the matters are urgent.

That for the financial year 2012/13 the Council will ensure that no pensioner household over 75 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

(i) the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 75 or over on 1 April 2012 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2012 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);

(ii) this reduction will be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;

(iii) application must be made for the reduction where it is not currently in payment or the potential claimant is not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit;

No pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Benefit will qualify for the reduction.

It be noted that, at its meeting on 8 December 2011 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2012/13 as 106,058 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, under Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the 'Act').

The following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2012/13 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act.

- (a) £818,095,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;.
- (b) £685,924,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £132,171,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year;.
- (d) £1,246.22 being the amount at (c) divided by the Council Tax Base, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

Wirral Services		Valuation Bands					
A	£830.82	B	£969.28	C	£1,107.75	D	£1,246.22
E	£1,523.16	F	£1,800.10	G	£2,077.04	H	£2,492.44

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings in Valuation Band D, calculated in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings as listed in different valuation bands.

It is noted that this equates to 0.6% Wirral Council Tax reduction.

It be noted that for the year 2012/13 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts of precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Fire		Valuation Bands					
A	£44.91	B	£52.39	C	£59.88	D	£67.36
E	£82.33	F	£97.30	G	£112.27	H	£134.72

Police		Valuation Bands					
A	£100.41	B	£117.15	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.24

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts for Wirral services and the Fire and Police precepts, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of council tax for the year 2012/13 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

Wirral Council		Valuation Bands					
A	£976.14	B	£1,138.82	C	£1,301.51	D	£1,464.20
E	£1,789.58	F	£2,114.96	G	£2,440.34	H	£2,928.40

It is noted that this equates to a 0% overall increase in Council Tax.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

LABOUR AMENDMENT

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES

	BASE ESTIMATE 2011/12 £	CURRENT ESTIMATE 2011/12 £	BASE ESTIMATE 2012/13 £
EXPENDITURE			
Departmental budgets	266,426,900	273,337,000	268,675,500
Merseytravel	28,817,000	28,817,000	29,060,000
Local Pay Review	956,300	545,900	545,900
Contribution to Fund EVR/VS Scheme	5,794,700	0	0
EVR / VS Scheme 2012 Savings	0	0	(910,000)
Net budget	301,994,900	302,699,900	297,371,400
Potential departmental overspends	0	4,000,000	0
Contribution from balances	(7,165,900)	(11,688,300)	(10,630,500)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
INCOME			
Revenue Support Grant	37,498,000	37,498,000	(471,100)
National Non Domestic Rate	121,312,000	121,312,000	145,208,200
Council Tax Freeze Grant	3,285,000	3,285,000	6,572,800
Local Support Services Grant	0	1,482,600	1,804,900
Council Tax Income	131,434,000	131,434,000	132,171,000
Collection Fund Surplus	1,300,000	0	1,455,100
TOTAL INCOME	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE			
General Balance at 1 April	14,070,600	14,070,600	16,405,300
Adjustment (following 2010/11 outturn)	0	1,000,000	0
Contribution from Capitalisation	0	2,600,000	0
Budgeted contribution	(7,165,900)	(7,688,300)	(10,630,500)
Provision to meet departmental overspends	0	(4,000,000)	0
Release of Housing Benefit Reserves	0	5,000,000	0
Release of Other Reserves and Provisions	0	5,423,000	0
Release of Technical Services Reserve	0	0	285,000
GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH	6,904,700	16,405,300	6,059,800

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – BUDGET AMENDMENTS:

AMENDMENT 1

PEOPLE'S DIVIDEND:

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney (7 minutes)
 Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

That the Budget proposed by Cabinet 21 Feb be amended as follows;

Delete at page 1, paragraph 7:

“A rebate equivalent to a 3% cut in the Council Tax. With a commitment to work in future years to make this permanent”

and replace with:

This year, the Council has a one-off sum of money that has been released from reserves, based on reports from the Director of Finance and agreed by Cabinet on 21 February. This is money that was put aside for specific purposes, is no longer needed for those purposes and is currently sitting in the Council's bank account. This money was collected from, and belongs to Wirral households and we should give it back. Therefore, the sum of £4million is to be redistributed (with no impact on the overall financial position of the Budget 2012/13 proposed by Cabinet on 21 February) and paid in the form of a one-off council tax rebate payment, as a **'People's Dividend' of £30 to all Wirral households**. Council recognises that this can have a real and positive impact as a stimulus to the local economy and will be distributed in a way that will proportionately benefit those in lower Council Tax bands the most.

No rebate will be payable in respect of empty properties or second homes. Any other applied discounts will also apply to the value of the rebate.

Council Tax levels will also be set to ensure that there is **no overall increase in Council Tax** by absorbing the precept increases from balances in 2012/13 at a cost of £740,000. It should be noted that the Cabinet proposal of 21 February was for a 0.48% increase in Council Tax.

It also be noted that this represents an effective progressive rebate in Council Tax for 2012/13 as shown in the table below.

Table: Comparison of effect of the 'People's Dividend' amendment.

Council Tax Band	Council Tax (inc. precepts) in Cabinet budget	Cabinet rebate	Net Cabinet Council Tax	Council Tax (inc. precepts) in Lib Dem amendment	Lib Dem rebate 'People's Dividend'	Net Lib Dem Council Tax	Difference between Cabinet and Lib Dem proposals
A	£980.79	£22.00	£958.79	£976.14	£30.00	£946.14	£12.65
B	£1,144.24	£25.67	£1,118.58	£1,138.82	£30.00	£1,108.82	£9.76
C	£1,307.72	£29.33	£1,278.39	£1,301.51	£30.00	£1,271.51	£6.88
D	£1,471.18	£33.00	£1,438.18	£1,464.20	£30.00	£1,434.20	£3.98
E	£1,798.11	£40.33	£1,757.78	£1,789.58	£30.00	£1,759.58	-£1.80
F	£2,125.04	£47.67	£2,077.37	£2,114.96	£30.00	£2,084.96	-£7.59
G	£2,451.97	£55.00	£2,396.97	£2,440.34	£30.00	£2,410.34	-£13.37
H	£2,942.35	£66.00	£2,876.36	£2,928.40	£30.00	£2,898.40	-£22.04

Note: 9 out of 10 households are Bands A, B, C or D and benefit more from these proposals in comparison with the Cabinet proposals.

Any requirement of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 to consider reports be dispensed with on the grounds that, in the opinion of the Council, the matters are urgent.

That for the financial year 2012/13 the Council will ensure that no pensioner household over 70 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

(i) the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 70 or over on 1 April 2012 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2012 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);

(ii) this reduction will be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;

(iii) application must be made for the reduction where it is not currently in payment or the potential claimant is not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit;

No pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Benefit will qualify for the reduction.

It be noted that, at its meeting on 8 December 2011 the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for 2012/13 as 106,058 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, under Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the 'Act').

The following amounts be calculated by the Council for the year 2012/13 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act.

- (a) £818,095,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;.
- (b) £685,924,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3)of the Act.
- (c) £132,171,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year;.
- (d) £1,246.22 being the amount at (c) divided by the Council Tax Base, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

Wirral Services

Valuation Bands

A	£830.82	B	£969.28	C	£1,107.75	D	£1,246.22
E	£1,523.16	F	£1,800.10	G	£2,077.04	H	£2,492.44

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (d) by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings in

Valuation Band D, calculated in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings as listed in different valuation bands.

It is noted that this equates to 0.6% Wirral Council Tax reduction.

It be noted that for the year 2012/13 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts of precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Fire		Valuation Bands					
A	£44.91	B	£52.39	C	£59.88	D	£67.36
E	£82.33	F	£97.30	G	£112.27	H	£134.72

Police		Valuation Bands					
A	£100.41	B	£117.15	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.24

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts for Wirral services and the Fire and Police precepts, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of council tax for the year 2012/13 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

Wirral Council		Valuation Bands					
A	£976.14	B	£1,138.82	C	£1,301.51	D	£1,464.20
E	£1,789.58	F	£2,114.96	G	£2,440.34	H	£2,928.40

It is noted that this equates to a 0% overall increase in Council Tax.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES

	BASE ESTIMATE 2011/12 £	CURRENT ESTIMATE 2011/12 £	BASE ESTIMATE 2012/13 £
EXPENDITURE			
Departmental budgets	266,426,900	273,337,000	264,389,500
Merseytravel	28,817,000	28,817,000	29,060,000
Local Pay Review	956,300	545,900	545,900
Contribution to Fund EVR/VS Scheme	5,794,700	0	0
EVR / VS Scheme 2012 Savings	0	0	(910,000)
Net budget	301,994,900	302,699,900	293,085,400
Potential Overspends	0	2,000,000	0
Council Tax Reimbursement	0	0	4,000,000
Contribution from Balances	(7,165,900)	(9,688,300)	(10,344,500)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
INCOME			
Revenue Support Grant	37,498,000	37,498,000	(471,100)
National Non Domestic Rate	121,312,000	121,312,000	145,208,200
Council Tax Freeze Grant	3,285,000	3,285,000	6,572,800
Local Support Services Grant	0	1,482,600	1,804,900
Council Tax Income	131,434,000	131,434,000	132,171,000
Collection Fund Surplus	1,300,000	0	1,455,100
TOTAL INCOME	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE			
General Balance at 1 April	14,070,600	14,070,600	18,405,300
Adjustment (following 2010/11 outturn)	0	1,000,000	0
Contribution from Capitalisation	0	2,600,000	0
Budgeted Contribution	(7,165,900)	(9,688,300)	(10,344,500)
Release of Housing Benefit Reserves	0	5,000,000	0
Release of Other Reserves and Provisions	0	5,423,000	0
GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH	6,904,700	18,405,300	8,060,800

AMENDMENT 2

AREA FORUMS:

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

In the 'Your Neighbourhood' section, 'Investing in the people's priorities', add a new section:

Council welcomes the additional resources devolved to area forums and the removal of further barriers to the local determination of spending and notes that the total amount allocated for 2012/13 is over £1.1million.

Council believes that the 'one size fits all' model is unsustainable and resolves to reallocate the total budget between the forums based on equal shares, plus an assessment of relative need (with no impact on the overall financials). Therefore, Council instructs that 70% of current Area Forum funding be allocated on the basis of equal shares, and 30% allocated on the basis of IMD, as these indices are broadly recognised as the best indicator of relative need.

Each Area Forum will be required to set out their own Budget, using the Neighbourhood Plans as the initial basis for prioritisation of Area Forum resources. As well as the devolution of funding to Area Forums, the Local Democracy Working Party is requested to give urgent consideration (as an embedded part of any new committee structures brought forward) to giving Area Forum Councillors delegated authority for agreeing the allocation of Area Forum budgets.

Chief Officers are also requested to review and identify devolvable budget lines and make recommendations as to the fairest method of distribution.

AMENDMENT 3

TRADE UNIONS:

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

That the Budget proposed by Cabinet 21 Feb be amended as follows;

Trade Union contribution:

Under 'Cutting the cost of Council administration', delete "For the next twelve months we will fund this activity from the Council's efficiency budget and conduct a full review to ensure Wirral's Trades unions can effectively represent their members if the payment for full time officers is withdrawn."

and replace with:

For the next twelve months we will fund this activity from the Council's efficiency budget whilst we conduct a full review. Council believes that the scale of investment in these services should be a reflection of workforce numbers and the duties required for adequate representation and that work to establish this should be undertaken as part of this review. We will give a commitment to ensure that sustainable arrangements are in place for appropriate funding in future years at the conclusion of the review.

AMENDMENT 4

COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND LOCAL SHOPPING AREAS

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

Anti Social Behaviour:

Under 'Investing in the people's priorities' add to end of paragraph on Anti-social behaviour; "This review will include the implementation of community justice in this vital area."

Helping our local shopping areas and Free After Three:

Under 'Your Economy', insert additional paragraph after the paragraphs on 'helping our local shopping areas' and 'free after three' parking;

- A thorough evaluation of the results and economic impact of the measures included in the Budget to assist our local shopping areas will be reported to an appropriate Cabinet meeting in order to help inform future targeting of resources. £20,000 to be allocated from the Efficiency Investment Budget to carry out this evaluation.