



Cabinet

Date:	Thursday, 6 November 2014
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA SUPPLEMENT

4. OUTCOME OF FUTURE COUNCIL BUDGET OPTIONS
CONSULTATION (Pages 1 - 42)

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

6 NOVEMBER 2014

SUBJECT:	FUTURE COUNCIL 2014: CONSULTATION FINDINGS (CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUDGET OPTIONS)
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
KEY DECISION?	NO

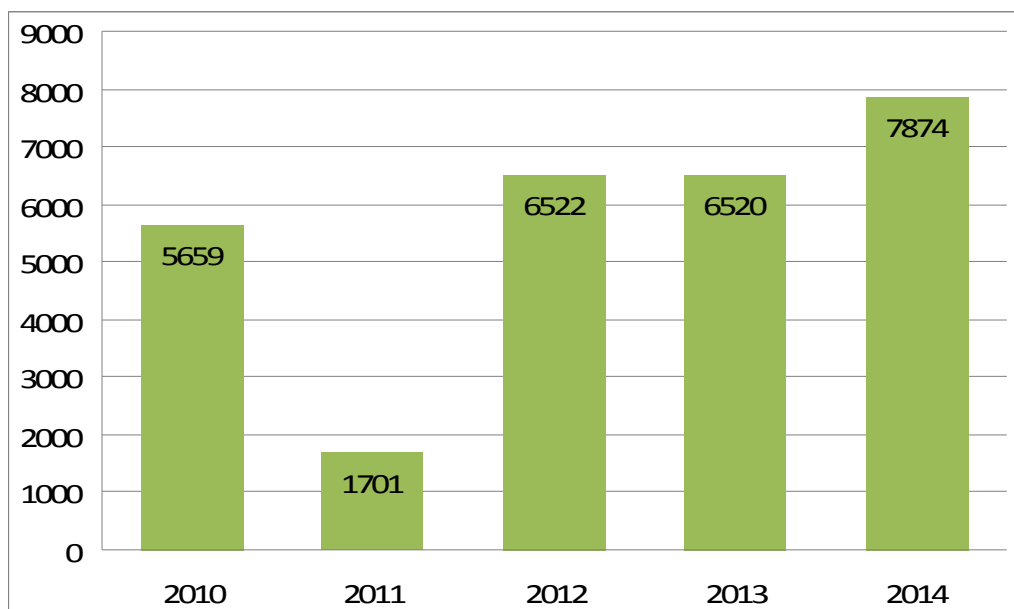
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Chief Executive, on September 08 2014, published a series of budget proposals for public consultation as the Council seeks to make savings of £18 million in 2015/2016.
- 1.2 The Future Council project has been able to identify potential savings of £15.5 million through changes and efficiencies which would not require public consultation. If implemented, these changes would potentially reduce the budget gap to £2.5 million. Options were proposed for public consultation which totalled £3.7 million in 2015/2016, providing choice for Members in setting the budget.
- 1.3 This report presents the feedback from public consultation on those options for consideration by Cabinet.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Council has been aware of an increasing need to reduce its budget requirement, as outlined in its medium term financial strategy. Last year significant savings were agreed by Council in March 2014. £57 million in already agreed savings have a phased impact to 2017. However, further savings are required going forward. £18 million is required in 2015/2016, £27 million is required in 2016/2017 and, according to current estimates, £25 million will be required in 2017/2018. Total savings required over the next three years is therefore in the region of £70 million.
- 2.3 The Chief Executive published his options for how the £18 million in 2015/2016 savings could be achieved on 08 September 2014. These options have been the subject of a comprehensive programme of public consultation, which ended on 31 October 2014, the feedback to which is contained within this report.

2.4 The consultation resulted in 7874 individual questionnaires being returned, together with a series of letters, emails and petitions. This is a higher response level than any previous Wirral Council budget option consultation, and also higher than any comparable exercise nationally. The various levels of response achieved through budget consultations since 2010's "Wirral's Future" exercise is shown in the table below. In 2011 the Council delivered an online budget simulator exercise, with no specific budget proposals.



2.6 The budget proposals put forward total almost £4 million in savings for 2015/2016 and were presented for public consultation within a questionnaire. The detailed consultation findings against each option are provided within the appendices to this report. The table below shows a basic dashboard of the quantitative responses to the consultation questionnaire.

Budget Proposal	Saving 15/16 £000s	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
West Kirby Marine Lake	25	21.2%	42.5%	16.5%	9.7%	10.2%
All Age Disability Service	600	11.3%	36.0%	25.8%	13.7%	13.2%
Youth and Play	450	5.5%	12.8%	16.9%	29.0%	35.7%
Preventative Maintenance	570	7.9%	27.8%	15.7%	30.0%	18.6%
School Crossing Patrols	90	19.3%	36.4%	10.0%	16.3%	18.0%
C-Tax Over 70s Discount	600	25.2%	30.4%	10.9%	15.8%	17.7%
Commemorations	100	23.4%	45.5%	15.1%	9.3%	6.6%
Allotments, Bowling, Football	35	22.9%	43.1%	11.4%	11.9%	10.7%
Parking (Countryside Parks)	50	8.4%	18.7%	6.8%	25.2%	41.0%
Parking (Fort Perch Rock)	25	12.9%	28.6%	9.7%	18.8%	30.0%
Litter and Dog Fouling	70	49.4%	33.5%	8.6%	4.1%	4.4%
Cold Calling Zones	80	14.1%	18.3%	24.7%	19.9%	23.0%
Pest Control	65	14.7%	38.9%	19.0%	15.6%	11.8%
Public Conveniences	140	8.9%	17.0%	13.2%	28.1%	32.8%
Roadside Grit Bins	55	12.3%	29.6%	19.5%	20.8%	17.9%

Girtrell Court	385	19.6%	44.4%	23.0%	5.6%	7.4%
Community Libraries	411	15.6%	38.3%	10.2%	11.4%	24.4%

3.0 CONSULTATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Budget options were grouped according to one of four change themes which were proposed for consultation, as the basis of a future transformational change programme for the Council. The change themes were:

- Delivering Differently: We will robustly assess the best means of delivering a service – choosing the most efficient and effective option.
- Managing Demand: Reducing demand and the cost of specialist, substantial services through empowering people and communities to help themselves.
- Income and Efficiency: Stop subsidising chargeable services unless it helps us to meet another objective. Every pound spent on bureaucracy and subsidies is a pound diverted from the most vulnerable.
- Customer Contact: We have to be serious about moving our customers away from expensive ways of contacting us – targeting instead those who need face to face support.

3.2 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:

- Questionnaire: The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
- Consultation Pack: One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
- Summary Paper: Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
- Business Cases: These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

3.3 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.

4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Council has built up an extensive database of email addresses from residents, partners and other stakeholders who have opted to provide their details to receive information about Council services and consultations. This database received regular emails about the budget options and consultation process.
- 4.2 The Council's website was also used extensively throughout the consultation, with a home page presence promoting the project. Emails were also sent at regular intervals to our own staff as well as to colleagues working for organisations within the Public Service Board. The Council's various social networking profiles and other websites were also used to promote the consultation.
- 4.3 Over 300 community organisations were directly contacted through Constituency Teams, highlighting the consultation programme and ensuring that all residents who are members of community organisations were directly engaged with as part of the consultation process.
- 4.4 Questionnaires and information related to the consultation were also distributed through the network of one stop shops, leisure centres, libraries and children's centres throughout the borough.
- 4.5 The local and regional media also promoted and featured the consultation regularly throughout the programme. Further coverage was also received through a number of community owned and managed magazines, newsletters and websites. The Council also ensured a presence throughout a number of supermarkets highlighting the project throughout the consultation period.

5.0 STAFF CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The budget options were presented to staff on the day they were published. The public consultation is ongoing at the same time as statutory consultation is taking place with staff affected by the remodelling of the Council process, which is part of savings agreed at Council as part of the budget setting process.
- 5.2 Regular communication with the workforce took place throughout the consultation period, in the form of emails from the Chief Executive and a series of visits to teams and offices by the Chief Executive. All correspondence to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive was also considered as part of the consultation process. Formal consultation and engagement with Trade Union representatives continues.

6.0 TARGETED CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Many of the options brought particular impacts or changes to service design to specific groups of residents. For these options, targeted consultation events and activity was delivered to ensure they had appropriate, and repeated, opportunities to have their say and feed their views into the process.

- 6.2 Consultation documents were distributed through all Wirral Council Youth Hubs and Centres, and to head teachers of primary, secondary and special schools throughout the borough.
- 6.3 Specific, targeted consultation activity also took place with service-user groups directly affected by the budget options – including friends of the parks groups, bowling and sports clubs particularly. A local organisation was also commissioned to produce Easy Read versions of the consultation literature to further improve accessibility to vulnerable groups.
- 6.4 All partner agencies were engaged with through the Public Service Board, with specific communications being distributed by partner agencies to their workforce.

7.0 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1 A programme of meetings was held during the consultation process with Members of the Council’s Policy and Performance Committees.
- 7.2 Members were provided with information related to each individual budget option within the scope of the Committee, with officers present to answer questions on the detail of each option in terms of potential impact, mitigation and deliverability. Members elected to establish task and finish working groups to examine selected options in more detail.
- 7.3 Members were further able to engage in the budget setting process through Constituency Committees, with each committee receiving either a report or a presentation describing the potential impact of each budget option to the particular constituency area.
- 7.4 Members in Wirral South, at their meeting, posed a series of questions related to the budget proposals which have been considered as part of the consultation process. Eastham Ward Members also submitted a detailed consultation response which has also been considered as part of this process.

8.0 PETITIONS RECEIVED

- 8.1 The following petitions related to the Future Council project have been received:

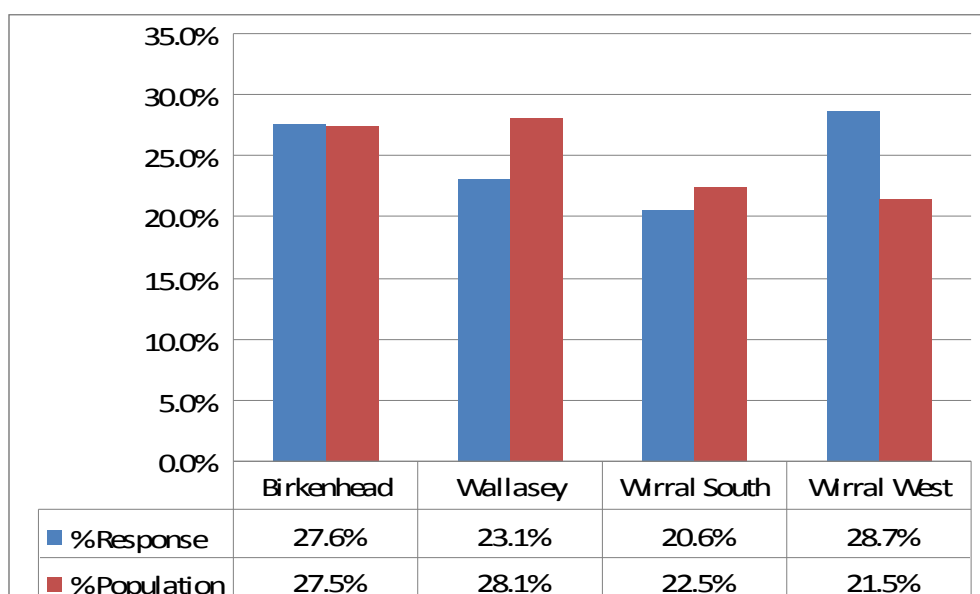
Petition	Signatures
Save our Services (Unison)	568
Save Wirral Sailing Centre	4739
Moreton Youth Centre	128
Greasby Library	353
Irby Library	336
Save Our Play Service	1899
Hoylake Library	10
Pensby Library	551

- 8.2 Numbers of signatures quoted are correct at the time of writing this report. A further petition related to a particular school crossing patrol in New Ferry was received and reported to Council on 16 October 2014. Further petitions were posted on the www.change.org website, relating to Wirral Play Council (61 signatures) and Moreton Youth Centre (16 signatures).
- 8.3 The lead petitioner for the 'Save Wirral Sailing Centre' petition has indicated that, should this saving form part of the Cabinet budget recommendation, he would like to assert his right to address Council on behalf of his petition, due to receiving more than the 3,000 signatures required under the Council's petition scheme. The Council has also received indications that a further paper petition, containing over 3000 signatures, will be received from Unison in addition to the e-survey listed above. If received, this petition would also trigger a debate at Council.

9.0 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- 9.1 The Council used online software to capture all responses and provide analysis of the quantitative aspect of the consultation questions. Responses which are completed online go directly into the system, and any hand written responses are manually inputted into the same system, using clear protocols.
- 9.2 All responses to individual questions were analysed regardless of whether questionnaires were fully or partially completed.
- 9.3 Responses were continually analysed to ensure the final sample was as representative of the population of the borough as possible. This information was used to provide ongoing guidance to engagement officers to inform their schedules of events and promotional activity.
- 9.4 Analysis was undertaken for each budget option, and this information can be found at Appendix 1-4 of this report. Individual questions were presented in quantitative format, inviting respondents to select a choice using a standard Likert scale:
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
- 9.5 Responses to the questionnaire are provided to Cabinet according to change theme, with a detailed analysis of both questionnaire responses, comments and other submissions received related to each budget option. Information in the form of 'free text' comments through the questionnaire was reviewed and analysed by the project team to identify common themes and suggestions. A summary of these comments is included within the Appendices to this report alongside the appropriate budget option. All of these comments are also available online at the Council website at www.wirral.gov.uk/futurecouncil

- 9.6 The Council has been running budget consultations in this form since 2010 and consistently receives the highest level of engagement in the UK for any comparable exercise. This budget consultation received 7874 responses, a higher response rate to that which was received for this exercise in previous years and again higher than anything comparable in the UK.
- 9.7 The questionnaires include a section to capture demographic, geographic and other personal data about each respondent. These questions are entirely optional to complete, and the questionnaire makes that clear. These responses were analysed on an ongoing basis to monitor appropriate demographic and geographic representation against Wirral baselines.
- 9.8 The full geographic analysis, on a constituency basis, is provided in the chart below which compares the response from each constituency (as a percentage of the total response) against the population in that constituency as a percentage of the total Wirral population.



- 9.9 In terms of the age range of the respondents, the majority of returns came from residents within the 25-44 and 45-64 age bands. The full breakdown of the age range of respondents is provided in the table below.

Age Band	Count	%
Under 16	160	3.0%
16-24	370	6.9%
25-44	1423	26.4%
45-64	2051	38.0%
65+	1184	21.9%
Prefer not to say	208	3.9%

- 9.10 The consultation also attempted to gather data to demonstrate the ethnicity of the response sample. This data shows that 92% of the total response identified themselves as 'White – English' or 'Other – British' which is broadly representative of the Wirral population. 10.3% of respondents, 510, indicated

that they considered themselves to be a disabled person which is again broadly representative of the Wirral population.

9.11 The consultation further required respondents to identify their relationship to Wirral Council. The results of this question are provided to Cabinet through the table below.

Source	Count
Resident	6872
Member of Staff	1079
Local Business	176
Partner	62
Voluntary organisation	260

10.0 RELEVANT RISKS

10.1 A project team was established and met on a weekly basis to develop and deliver a project plan, with robust risk assessment arrangements. The key risk for this project is that failure to deliver a successful consultation project will leave the Council unable to develop a corporate or financial plan and make the budget savings required in 2015/2016.

11.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Council has made a commitment that all decisions related to the budget setting process should be underpinned by comprehensive, genuine and robust consultation with all stakeholders. Therefore no further options have been considered.

12.0 CONSULTATION

12.1 The Council has agreed with the voluntary, community and faith sector to define and strengthen relationships between these sectors for the benefit of all Wirral communities. There is a commitment to extensive consultation with local communities. The legal responsibilities regarding consultation and engagement are set out below.

13.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

13.1 All outstanding actions are complete.

14.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

14.1 Engagement with organisations within the voluntary, community and faith sector has taken place and this work will continue to ensure that, where applicable, the sector is fully engaged and able to provide those services where a commissioning need may arise.

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

15.1 Existing staffing resources were used to develop and deliver this project, through the establishment of a dedicated project team using skills and expertise from across the organisation, led by the Strategic Director for Transformation and Resources.

16.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 Recent case law has made it clear that any consultation undertaken must be meaningful, informed and reasonable. Failure to ensure this could lead to legal challenge and any decision taken which takes into account the consultation could be undermined and open to challenge by way of Judicial Review.
- 16.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 came into force in April 2009 and introduced a duty for local authorities to involve, inform and consult with their communities. The duty is wide-ranging and applies to the delivery of services, policy and decision making and means the Council must consult relevant individuals, groups, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders that the Authority considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, their actions and functions.
- 16.3 Certain budget proposals will be subject to further, statutory consultation on a one to one or other direct basis with people using the service(s) affected.

17.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 17.1 Yes. An Equality Impact Assessment was developed and reported to Cabinet on 13 March 2014.

Individual Equality Impact Assessments relating to each budget proposal have been developed and are published for Members on the Council website from the following link.

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014>

18.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 18.1 None arising directly as a result of this report.

19.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 19.1 None arising directly as a result of this report.

20.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 20.1 That Cabinet notes the consultation process and implementation described within this report, and thanks Wirral residents, staff and other stakeholders for their input.
- 20.2 That Cabinet notes the detailed consultation findings in relation to each budget option as contained within Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4 and the feedback from Policy and Performance Committee Members which are provided as further Appendices to this report.

21.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 21.1 The recommendations respond to the Cabinet and Council commitment that budget decisions should be taken on the basis of robust, comprehensive and genuine consultation with Wirral residents, Council staff and all stakeholders.

REPORT Emma Degg
AUTHOR: Head of Neighbourhoods and Engagement

APPENDICES

1. Delivering Differently Budget Options
2. Managing Demand Budget Options
3. Income and Efficiency Budget Options
4. Customer Contact Budget Options

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	19 June 2014
Cabinet	10 April 2014
Cabinet	13 March 2014

Chief Executive's Budget Proposals Future Council Project

Public Consultation Feedback	
Theme	Delivering Differently
Definition	We will robustly assess the best means of delivering a service, choosing the most efficient and effective option.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The future plans and budget proposals within the change theme of 'Delivering Differently' are presented for Members within this report. Also presented is the quantitative feedback received through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of the main themes emerging through qualitative feedback, from sources such as the consultation questionnaire, meetings with groups and letters, emails and other communications sent directly into the consultation process.
- 1.2 Where targeted consultation took place with people using services affected by a budget option, feedback received is presented alongside the appropriate budget option.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:
- **Questionnaire:** The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
 - **Consultation Pack:** One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
 - **Summary Paper:** Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
 - **Business Cases:** These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.
- 2.2 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.
- 2.3 Within the consultation documents, residents were provided with an explanation of what each change theme meant in practice – and what future plans and projects would be delivered in the coming years. They were then provided the opportunity to comment on those proposals and give an indication on whether they were appropriate and if they would suggest any changes.

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- 2.4 Residents were then provided with the specific, immediate budget proposals put forward by the Chief Executive. Residents were provided with an explanation of the impact of the option and the associated saving and requested to indicate if they supported the implementation of the option.

3.0 WE CONSULTED ON THE FOLLOWING FUTURE PLANS

- 3.1 In relation to 'Delivering Differently', residents were provided the following explanation of the change theme on which they were requested to provide feedback and comments.

"We will robustly assess the best means of delivering a service – choosing the most efficient and effective option. This theme focuses on fundamentally changing the way the Council delivers services. The scale of the budget reductions we are facing means that, inevitably, we will commission more services than we provide in the future – either through private companies, the voluntary sector or through another type of arrangement, such as a shared service with another Council or public sector agency.

This does not mean we will 'outsource' services for the sake of it.

We will analyse, model and research the best, most appropriate and cost effective way of delivering every Council service in the future – using a fair, systematic and consistent approach.

To make this work, we will use our influence to make sure that all public services in the borough work together, acting as 'one team' to make sure we get the maximum value for public money. We will make sure money isn't being spent on similar things by different organisations when we can get better value through doing things together. We will also support partners and develop the skills and capacity within the community, voluntary, faith and private sectors so that the services we need to commission externally can be delivered to the standard that we need.

Throughout the organisation, we will continue to review every service area to assess and evaluate the best way of delivering that service in the future. We are in the process of implementing the biggest change, and reduction, in our back office services we have ever completed, which will bring a big impact on our workforce. We will go further in the future, and find a new, more cost effective and equally as efficient way of delivering all of our back office services, making sure as much public money as possible is invested directly into the front line.

All of our professional services, such as Internal Audit, Finance, HR and Legal, will be further reviewed and a project will be established to explore new ways of delivering those services for 2016-17, delivering significant savings. A similar approach will be taken to the 'Transaction Centre' which we are in the process of establishing.

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On the ground, we will be investing in new technology to provide LED Street Lighting. Cheaper to operate, better for the environment and, crucially, brighter – this investment will see us make long term savings in this area without switching off, dimming or otherwise reducing the street lights on the borough’s highways.”

4.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

- 4.1 Responses were generally positive in terms of supporting the broad approach outlined in the consultation documents. Residents seemed particularly supportive of the suggested project to implement LED streetlights throughout the borough, which has since been the subject of a separate Cabinet report.
- 4.2 Responses did include many references to making sure the Council was operating efficiently, and that money invested in consultancy spend and bureaucracy, both in terms of the management and governance of the Council, should be kept to the absolute minimum.
- 4.3 Many different views were received on the potential for commissioning, rather than directly delivering, services. Some responses focussed on the positive impact this could bring to the private sector economy and potential increased efficiency, while others were concerned at a possible loss of ‘control’ in relation to the quality and accessibility of the services provided.
- 4.4 Some respondents expressed a view that salaries and total expenditure related to senior management should be reviewed to achieve savings together with various expenses and other benefits. Many respondents also highlighted the potentially negative impact on both the local economy and the Council’s ability to deliver services following substantial job losses.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Residents were then provided with a series of budget proposals from the Chief Executive to comment on. These proposals are provided below together with the public feedback which has been received, alongside the feedback any from targeted consultation which has taken place.

Option: West Kirby Marine Lake

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
25	-	25

Wirral Sailing Centre is based at West Kirby Marine Lake and offers water sports activities and courses to anyone aged 8 and over. Many

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recreational activities are provided at the site such as water sports like windsurfing, kayaking and powerboating.

This option would see us seeking to transfer the day to day operations of the site to another organisation – keeping the facility open but removing some of the financial burden to the Council.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	21.2%	1209
Agree	42.5%	2428
Neither agree nor disagree	16.5%	944
Disagree	9.7%	552
Strongly disagree	10.2%	582

A petition in opposition to this option was received, containing over 4000 signatures, and is detailed in the substantive report. This petition will be presented at Council in December. The Chief Executive also received a number of letters expressing concern at the potential for a drop in service quality if this option was accepted.

Option: All Age Disability Service

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
600	-	600

This option would involve a holistic review and redesign of the way we deliver services to disabled children and their families, including overnight short breaks at Willow Tree and how children's and adults services work together. It would mean a redesign of how support is delivered, with greater integration with other service areas, in particular early help and adult social care.

Detailed consultation with children and families would take place before any changes and the Council will put measures in place to minimise the impact on families accessing the service. Willow Tree is currently accessed by around 58 children and young people. This is a valuable yet costly service and there could be opportunities to deliver the service more efficiently.

The Children with Disabilities Team works with around 230 children and young people. Around a quarter of these children are open to Social Care but do not have a Social Worker.

It is recognised that the majority of parents of disabled children do not want social work intervention; instead they want high quality, reliable consistent support to help them as a family. They also want a smooth

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transfer into adult services when appropriate. Therefore the benefit of these proposals is that families would receive help and support via at the earliest opportunity and a graduated response according to their needs wherever possible. They could also benefit from more seamless links between children's and adult services.

The service has a total budget of £5.5 million. Data comparing Wirral to other local authorities for this area indicates that Wirral's spend is £35 per child (aged 0 - 17) compared to an average of £17 in 2013-14 for other councils. A different approach to helping disabled children and their families could deliver longer-term efficiencies. An early help approach would put the emphasis on helping families in a preventative way, making social work intervention a last resort.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	11.3%	640
Agree	36.0%	2036
Neither agree nor disagree	25.8%	1459
Disagree	13.7%	775
Strongly disagree	13.2%	745

Option: Youth and Play

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
450	-	450

The Council has committed to making a major capital investment in a state of the art new Youth Zone, to be built in Birkenhead. This option would see the Council reduce the funding associated with the existing youth service while that facility is developed.

The Youth Service currently costs the Council £2.38 million, and this option proposes a saving of £450,000; around a 19% reduction.

Initially, this option would involve closing four satellite youth centres. The Council will continue to provide four larger youth 'hubs' (currently located in Birkenhead, West Kirby, Wallasey and Eastham), however, opening hours will reduce from five to four evenings per week. This proposal would also see the Council stop the funding associated with the three current 'Play Schemes', Wirral Play Council, the Civic Award Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

There is potential for voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to provide services which would replace the proposed reduction to those provided by the Council. Funding could also be made available through

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constituency committees to support youth work, particularly outreach work where needed within their communities.

In 2013/14, approximately 8,000 individual children and young people aged 6-19 years, used the service, a majority of whom come from areas of high socio-economic deprivation. 88% of young people using the provision are from the 20% most deprived districts in Wirral.

The Youth and Play service responds to local need through experienced, specialist, professional staff and benefits from responding to and contributing to regional and national agendas. Key to its sustainability is how it ensures young people contribute to society as respected and respectable citizens within their own communities, the workplace, and education within the youth community.

To enable the strategic co-ordination of Youth and Play work activities and facilities across Wirral and to avoid duplication, the service currently works closely with a variety of partner agencies including Public Health, Merseyside Police, Wirral Brook and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

The Youth Support Service is organised geographically across the four constituencies and works with partners to meet the needs of young people avoiding any duplication. Youth Outreach Teams target hot spot areas for youths causing disruption. Withdrawing or reducing Youth and Play services would reduce the Council's ability to do this, which may impact on the contribution the Service makes to partners' targets (e.g. teenage conception rates, substance misuse, youth crime, anti-social behaviour). This could result in partners not realising national and local performance indicators.

If this option was accepted, funding would be made available for local constituency committees to commission their own youth outreach work in their local communities to mitigate the reduction of services provided directly by the Council.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.8%	342
Agree	12.8%	794
Neither agree nor disagree	16.9%	1045
Disagree	29.0%	1800
Strongly disagree	35.7%	2215

A number of letters were received in opposition to this proposal, including one which referred to a committee which had been established to protect the 'Play Service' element of the option, and was sent to all local MPs. A number of petitions related to the Play Service, Wirral Play Council and Moreton Youth Centre were also received and are detailed within the

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substantive report. The Council also received a letter from the Head of Manor Primary School, expressing concerns at the potential impact of the closure of the Play Schemes affected by this option.

Within this option, respondents were also asked to indicate if they believed there were other areas within Wirral which were more appropriate to hold a 'Youth Hub' facility. Almost 2000 people made suggestions in this area, covering a wide range of areas and ideas. Many people raised concerns that the proposed Youth Zone in Birkenhead would present travel problems for those young people living in other areas of the borough.

Lots of suggestions presented the idea that Youth Hubs should be centrally located in the borough, and areas such as Rock Ferry were mentioned frequently. Areas such as Bebington, Bromborough and New Ferry were also mentioned – as was Woodchurch, which was frequently highlighted as an area which would benefit from more youth support.

Chief Executive's Budget Proposals Future Council Project

Public Consultation Feedback	
Theme	Managing Demand
Definition	We will reduce the demand and subsequently the cost of specialist, substantial services through empowering people and communities to help themselves.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The future plans and budget proposal within the change theme of 'Managing Demand' are presented for Members within this report. Also presented is the quantitative feedback received through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of the main themes emerging through qualitative feedback, from sources such as the consultation questionnaire, meetings with groups and letters, emails and other communications sent directly into the consultation process.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:

- Questionnaire: The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
- Consultation Pack: One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
- Summary Paper: Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
- Business Cases: These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

2.2 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.

2.3 Within the consultation documents, residents were provided with an explanation of what each change theme meant in practice – and what future plans and projects would be delivered in the coming years. They were then provided the opportunity to comment on those proposals and give an indication on whether they were appropriate and if they would suggest any changes.

2.4 Residents were then provided with the specific, immediate budget proposals put forward by the Chief Executive. Residents were provided

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with an explanation of the impact of the option and the associated saving and requested to indicate if they supported the implementation of the option.

3.0 WE CONSULTED ON THE FOLLOWING FUTURE PLANS

- 3.1** In relation to 'Managing Demand', residents were provided the following explanation of the change theme on which they were requested to provide feedback and comments.

"We will reduce the demand and subsequently the cost of specialist, substantial services through empowering people and communities to help themselves. We will place a major emphasis in the future on working with people, and communities, to both improve their aspirations and achievements and also limit the resources needed for costly, specialist services. We will also focus on improving people's living situations, aspirations and general family life across a whole range of areas - reducing the demand on Council services, enabling the money saved to be better invested elsewhere.

This will involve a complete redesign of the way outcomes are achieved for children, young people and vulnerable adults in Wirral. The focus will be on increasing independence, and reducing demand on Council resources, as well as joining up our work with partners, such as the NHS – which will provide major savings but also a more integrated service for people receiving support.

We are in the process of reviewing our entire approach to delivering both children's and adults' social care – making sure we tackle potential problems early, before they require costly, specialist support services. We will place more emphasis, and resources, into services for early intervention and prevention – making sure people stay independent for longer and that specialist services are needed less. We will work particularly with our younger people to increase their independence through raising their aspirations and ambitions for the future.

We will also implement a full programme of behaviour change activity, targeted at problem issues in the borough which drain significant public resources sometimes unnecessarily. This will focus on reducing issues such as litter, dog fouling, criminal damage such as graffiti and other forms of vandalism such as fly tipping."

4.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

- 4.1** Respondents were again generally supportive of the broad policy in this area. Of particular interest were issues such as litter, dog fouling, criminal damage and fly tipping. Respondents were keen to see the Council work with communities to develop solutions to tackle these issues.
- 4.2** Respondents were also supportive of the principle of promoting independence, and focussing on early intervention and absolutely

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understood the social, health and financial benefits. Respondents did highlight concerns that focussing on early intervention and independence should not lead to vulnerable people being abandoned and unnecessarily losing care or support.

- 4.3 Further concerns were highlighted in relation to communities being empowered to develop and deliver their own solutions to local issues. Respondents were generally supportive of this approach in principle, but were concerned that without specialist support and advice from the Council this approach would be difficult to deliver successfully.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Residents were then provided with the budget proposals from the Chief Executive in this area to comment on. These proposals are provided below together with the public feedback which has been received.

Option: Preventative Maintenance

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
570	-	570

The vast majority of the funding the Council uses to maintain highways comes in the form of grants from national government. Wirral is one of only a few Councils in the country to put extra, local money into this fund to carry out 'preventative' work, across both our highways and our parks. This option would see us removing this additional investment, and focussing our maintenance work where there is a safety implication.

If non-essential maintenance to highways and coastal infrastructure is a priority for the community, then Constituency Committees could include it in their budget priorities. Increasing volunteer involvement in the maintenance of infrastructure, subject to safe systems of work, might also allow continued maintenance of the appearance of street furniture, for example, by painting of railings or restoration of highway seats.

Repairs to damage caused by vehicle collisions or vandalism represent a significant part of the maintenance budget. The Council needs to recover more of these costs and a campaign encouraging public support in identifying those causing the damage could help and result in greater funding being available for other maintenance or further savings.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	7.9%	421
Agree	27.8%	1479
Neither agree nor disagree	15.7%	833

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Disagree	30.0%	1591
Strongly disagree	18.6%	988

Option: School Crossing Patrols

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
90	65	155

Last year, the Council worked alongside all schools in the borough in an effort to share the costs of providing school crossing patrols. Only a few schools agreed to pay towards their costs. Therefore, this option would review the school crossing patrols which are currently at 47 sites across the borough where there is already a pedestrian, pelican or puffin crossing in place. Initial estimates that out of those 47 sites, a total of 41 school crossing patrols would be removed. We believe that, due to the crossing facilities which are in place 24 hours a day, the demand and requirement for a school crossing patrol is greatly reduced. However, before this option is implemented, a full risk assessment will be completed on every crossing site.

Surveys conducted in 2012 and 2013 indicate that school crossing patrols assist more than 20,000 people daily across the borough. Over 11,000 people use school crossing patrol sites at light controlled crossing points daily. Additional road safety education and training will be undertaken in schools on the use of light controlled crossings to mitigate the removal of any crossing patrol. If patrols are to be removed, schools may wish to continue the service by paying to provide a patrol at that site. Contact would be made with schools before any patrols are removed.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	19.3%	1039
Agree	36.4%	1958
Neither agree nor disagree	10.0%	536
Disagree	16.3%	877
Strongly disagree	18.0%	966

A petition relating to a specific school crossing patrol in New Ferry was reported to Council in October, which is also referenced in the substantive report. A number of letters from parents were also received by the School Crossing Patrol team which were considered as part of the consultation process.

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Chief Executive's Budget Proposals Future Council Project

Public Consultation Feedback	
Theme	Income and Efficiency
Definition	We will not subsidise chargeable services unless it helps us to meet another objective. Every pound spent on bureaucracy and subsidies is a pound diverted from the most vulnerable.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The future plans and budget proposal within the change theme of 'Income and Efficiency' are presented for Members within this report. Also presented is the quantitative feedback received through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of the main themes emerging through qualitative feedback, from sources such as the consultation questionnaire, meetings with groups and letters, emails and other communications sent directly into the consultation process.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:

- **Questionnaire:** The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
- **Consultation Pack:** One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
- **Summary Paper:** Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
- **Business Cases:** These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

2.2 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.

2.3 Within the consultation documents, residents were provided with an explanation of what each change theme meant in practice – and what future plans and projects would be delivered in the coming years. They were then provided the opportunity to comment on those proposals and give an indication on whether they were appropriate and if they would suggest any changes.

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- 2.4 Residents were then provided with the specific, immediate budget proposals put forward by the Chief Executive. Residents were provided with an explanation of the impact of the option and the associated saving and requested to indicate if they supported the implementation of the option.

3.0 WE CONSULTED ON THE FOLLOWING FUTURE PLANS

- 3.1 In relation to 'Income and Efficiency', residents were provided the following explanation of the change theme on which they were requested to provide feedback and comments.

"We will not subsidise chargeable services unless it helps us to meet another objective. Every pound spent on bureaucracy and subsidies is a pound diverted from frontline services. The work in this theme will make sure the Council is efficient when it comes to charging and collecting income for services; it will focus on improving and streamlining the way in which we operate and collect funding and bring a commercial approach to the Council's business where it is appropriate.

Many of our services are also chargeable – both in terms of residents paying for them but also other organisations such as schools, housing associations and other partner agencies. We will focus on making sure those charges are appropriate and, importantly, cover what the service costs us to deliver.

We will, over the course of the next year, place a much bigger emphasis on how we buy services and goods, how we collect income and how we charge for certain services. We will become, in the appropriate areas, a much more commercial organisation. Our procurement and change teams are being combined into one unit with a specific remit to focus on driving down costs on contracts, making the Council operate more efficiently, reducing duplication and streamlining processes.

We also operate a series of 'service level agreements', where we provide services to other agencies for a cost. We will review all of these agreements and make sure what we are charging is appropriate, and covers what the service is costing the Wirral taxpayer. Our enforcement teams will focus on community issues such as fly tipping, litter, dog fouling and graffiti.

We are not proposing to close any Leisure Centres. We believe that by modernising them, targeting marketing and promotion, and changing working practices we can drive up income to a level where we can keep our centres open, either managed by the Council or through another arrangement. We also believe we can generate more income through selling advertising space to businesses on Council land and other sites."

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4.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

- 4.1 Responses were broadly supportive of the overall approach outlined in the consultation documents and highlighted the need to ensure services are viable through levying appropriate charges for certain services.
- 4.2 Residents were generally keen on the proposal to increase revenue generated through advertising and sponsorship, but were clear that this should be done carefully and not at the expense of the local environment.
- 4.3 Concerns were raised that charging for certain services could deter usage and lead to further problems, and many responses mentioned issues such as fly tipping and others becoming more problematic if residents were expected to pay more towards their cost. Responses therefore requested that charges, where introduced or increased, should be realistic, appropriate and affordable.
- 4.4 However, respondents were generally in agreement that service level agreements and other contracts should be charged at the full cost or at a profit where appropriate. Concerns were limited to charging residents, and particularly low income or vulnerable residents, for services.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Residents were then provided with the budget proposals from the Chief Executive in this area to comment on. These proposals are provided below together with the public feedback which has been received.

Option: Council Tax Over 70s Discount

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
600	-	600

Wirral Council is the only Council in the UK which offers households a discount on their Council Tax based purely on their age and the Council Tax band of their home.

The discount is not means tested, people receive it regardless of their personal financial circumstances, and our residents with the lowest income already receive Council Tax Support and therefore either pay no, or only a proportion of, Council Tax.

We therefore propose this option, which would remove that discount for all current recipients to achieve a saving of £600,000.

Wirral has over 15,500 over 70's households with low incomes that receive Full Council Tax Support as a protected vulnerable group. These households will be unaffected by this proposal.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	25.2%	1319
Agree	30.4%	1590
Neither agree nor disagree	10.9%	573
Disagree	15.8%	830
Strongly disagree	17.7%	926

Option: Commemorations, Registrations and Memorials

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
100	100	200

It is proposed to merge the current births, deaths and marriages registrar team with the crematorium and burials registrar team, co-locating the merged team within one office. It is also proposed to raise burials and cremation fees to closer match those of neighbouring authorities, while not affecting our ability to offer a competitively priced service.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	23.4%	1221
Agree	45.5%	2376
Neither agree nor disagree	15.1%	790
Disagree	9.3%	487
Strongly disagree	6.6%	344

Option: Charging for Allotments, Bowling Greens and Football Pitches

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
35	-	35

The Council provides major subsidies for the maintenance and other running costs associated with football pitches, allotments and bowling greens across the borough. This option proposes that the Council implements an appropriate and reasonable price increase for people using these facilities so that, while not making the service break even, the subsidy required from the Council does reduce.

Football Pitches; 376 teams play on the 130 Council owned football pitches. The current price for a Type A Grade pitch, including changing

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and shower facilities, is £499 per year. This option would increase that charge by 10% to £549 per year.

Bowling Greens; 57 bowling clubs play on Council owned greens. This option would increase the annual charge for 'half share' from £1200 to £1440. The Council would still continue to subsidise this service by 85%. We will also work with bowling clubs to explore the possibility of transferring ownership and management of the greens from the Council to the clubs themselves.

Allotments; Fees for allotments are charged per plot. This option would increase the charge currently in place from £35.70 per year, to £52 per year (or £1 per week).

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	22.9%	1197
Agree	43.1%	2250
Neither agree nor disagree	11.4%	597
Disagree	11.9%	620
Strongly disagree	10.7%	561

Option: Car Parking – Countryside Parks

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
50	15	65

This option would introduce pay and display parking charges into the Parks and Countryside car parks at Arrowe Country Park, Eastham Country Park, Wirral Country Park and Royden Country Park. The option will generate income, but requires some investment in providing cash payment ticket machines. The income generated will assist in continuing the maintenance of the park.

Charging would allow the council to continue to offer public car parks into the future in a fair and sustainable manner, particularly given the financial strains on other areas. Charges are already in place in many other Council-provided car parks in other communities, particularly where there is a significant demand for parking.

The hours when charges would apply will be determined on a site by site basis, taking into account local factors, but are likely to start from 10am. Income from Parks car parks (after deduction of costs of collection) will be ring fenced for use on projects in the country park where the charge applies. It might be possible to provide discounted parking for volunteers and other regular users of the parks.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	8.4%	437
Agree	18.7%	978
Neither agree nor disagree	6.8%	353
Disagree	25.2%	1319
Strongly disagree	41.0%	2142

A number of letters and emails to both the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council were also received in opposition to this proposal.

Option: Car Parking – Fort Perch Rock

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
25	10	35

This option would introduce pay and display parking charges into the Fort Perch Rock car park at New Brighton, where there are presently no charges. The option will generate income from a well utilised car park and requires some investment in providing cash payment ticket machines. There are currently traffic problems developing around the successful New Brighton redevelopment, which it is thought would be eased through this approach. Prior to implementing this option the Council would work closely with local businesses and traders.

Charging would allow the council to continue to offer public car parks into the future in a fair and sustainable manner, particularly given the financial strains on other areas.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	12.9%	674
Agree	28.6%	1501
Neither agree nor disagree	9.7%	510
Disagree	18.8%	986
Strongly disagree	30.0%	1573

Option: Litter and Dog Fouling Enforcement

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
70	-	70

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Littering and dog fouling offences can impact adversely on the local environmental quality of Wirral. The Council has saved £1 million per year by targeting our street cleansing resources more efficiently. Many community groups have also risen to the challenge and play a significant role in keeping our borough clean and tidy. However, unfortunately, there are a minority of people that persist in discarding their rubbish irresponsibly.

The Council proposes to introduce a joint dog fouling and litter patrol team to target such offenders. A more generic team will maximise the limited resources available to tackle these problems.

This proposal is an enhancement to current service levels. In addition, longer term impacts should include a reduction in littering and dog fouling, leading to increased environmental quality and less demands on the Council's cleansing resources.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	49.4%	2589
Agree	33.5%	1758
Neither agree nor disagree	8.6%	452
Disagree	4.1%	216
Strongly disagree	4.4%	229

Option: Cold Calling Zones

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
80	60	140

Tackling commercial crimes conducted in people's homes is a national priority. This type of crime can take many forms, including distraction burglary or bogus callers, illegal money lending, scams or other forms of fraudulent activity.

Survey results show that 95.6% of households do not want doorstep cold callers with 20% of respondents reported having had problems following dealings with cold calling doorstep sellers.

This option proposes that we implement a small charge of £10 per household where a community wishes to implement a 'No Cold Calling Zone' in their street or area.

Residents within No Cold Calling Zones will benefit from a rapid response to reported instances of 'cold caller' activity. They will also benefit from a designated coordinator, link to 'Ringmaster' messaging and alerts, advice

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and guidance, a continuously updated directory of approved traders, street signage, window stickers and ongoing support.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	14.1%	738
Agree	18.3%	956
Neither agree nor disagree	24.7%	1294
Disagree	19.9%	1041
Strongly disagree	23.0%	1205

Option: Pest Control

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
65	-	65

This option proposes, alongside some staffing changes, a 10% increase in charges for all domestic and commercial services provided by Environmental Health, and the introduction of a charge for the element of the Pest Control service related to rats and cockroaches.

Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 the Local Authority has a duty to take such steps as may be necessary to secure so far as practicable that their district is kept free from rats and mice. This option proposes taking the same approach of many other local authorities by charging to deal with rat infestations. The proposed charge of £25 offers value when compared to commercial charges by larger private companies. A review of information provided on the Council's website would also be undertaken to ensure that advice is clear on what action can be taken to help prevent infestations by pests such as rats and mice.

The introduction of the charge for rats and the commercialisation of the service reduce the competitive impact of the Council on private pest control firms that operate within Wirral.

There are a number of private businesses which operate in Wirral that offer pest control services and a number of well known DIY stores that sell a range of products that can be used to control the common pest. If this budget option was approved, Call Centre staff would be trained to provide general advice on where to go to get advice on home treatments and what alternative private pest control companies operate in Wirral.

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Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	14.7%	765
Agree	38.9%	2028
Neither agree nor disagree	19.0%	993
Disagree	15.6%	812
Strongly disagree	11.8%	616

Option: Public Conveniences

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
140	-	140

The Council manages ten public convenience facilities across the borough. The provision of public conveniences is not a statutory function and there is no legal obligation on Wirral Council to provide this service.

This budget option would seek out community organisations that may wish to take on the full delivery, maintenance and operational costs of running the facilities in their area. If no suitable organisations could be identified then it is recommended that the facilities be permanently closed.

The public convenience facilities managed by the Council are located in retail and coastal areas which during the summer months in particular can be popular with shoppers and visitors, especially if the weather is good.

However, in some of the popular areas where these facilities are based there are often alternative toilets in shops and Council buildings that members of the public could use. In areas where there are other public toilets, improved signage could be placed to make locations clearer.

The number of people using Council-run toilets is unknown as the facilities are cleaned by mobile attendants and no counting system is use. However, anecdotally the high use sites in popular coastal areas such as West Kirby and New Brighton are thought to be used by thousands of people every year.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	8.9%	464
Agree	17.0%	886
Neither agree nor disagree	13.2%	691

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Disagree	28.1%	1469
Strongly disagree	32.8%	1714

Option: Roadside Grit Bins

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
55	-	55

The Council installed 100 roadside grit bins, which were strategically located throughout the borough, to help residents living on hills and other areas where ice and snow caused particular problems.

Following the success of this programme, the Council agreed to install 198 extra bins at residents' request. This option proposes that, while the winter maintenance and gritting routes would remain unaffected, the Council would no longer fill these 198 grit bins from the highway. Communities would be welcome to continue filling the bins with salt themselves should they wish to.

We would continue to provide precautionary salt spreading to the 10 priority routes, the clearance of ice and snow from these routes and major shopping areas and 100 grit bins which were installed in accordance with the criteria for the provision of grit bins.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	12.3%	641
Agree	29.6%	1543
Neither agree nor disagree	19.5%	1017
Disagree	20.8%	1084
Strongly disagree	17.9%	934

Option: Girtrell Court

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
385	-	385

Girtrell Court is a 'short break', respite service for adults with disabilities. The service has 20 beds, of which 15 are 'respite' and 5 are designated as permanent. At the moment, 130 people are registered to access respite through Girtrell Court, and all use it for a certain number of weeks per year.

This option would explore the possibility of using this facility more widely, this could potentially see Girtrell Court being invested in, and its

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capabilities expanded to enable the NHS to use the centre on a joint basis for patients who either do not need hospital care or who are being prepared for discharge following treatment.

This option could improve the facilities at Girtrell Court and expand the level of care and support which is currently available at the site.

Change can be difficult for people and their families, so a full review of all the options available will be undertaken in addition to full consultation with people directly impacted by any proposed changes before they are implemented.

This option would bring benefits to the NHS in particular, who have indicated they would welcome the opportunity to commission the support they require from an improved facility at Girtrell Court.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	19.6%	1024
Agree	44.4%	2317
Neither agree nor disagree	23.0%	1199
Disagree	5.6%	290
Strongly disagree	7.4	384

Chief Executive's Budget Proposals Future Council Project

Public Consultation Feedback	
Theme	Customer Contact
Definition	We have to be serious about moving our customers away from expensive ways of contacting us – targeting those who need face to face support.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The future plans and budget proposal within the change theme of 'Customer Contact' are presented for Members within this report. Also presented is the quantitative feedback received through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of the main themes emerging through qualitative feedback, from sources such as the consultation questionnaire, meetings with groups and letters, emails and other communications sent directly into the consultation process.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:

- Questionnaire: The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
- Consultation Pack: One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
- Summary Paper: Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
- Business Cases: These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

2.2 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.

2.3 Within the consultation documents, residents were provided with an explanation of what each change theme meant in practice – and what future plans and projects would be delivered in the coming years. They were then provided the opportunity to comment on those proposals and give an indication on whether they were appropriate and if they would suggest any changes.

2.4 Residents were then provided with the specific, immediate budget proposal put forward by the Chief Executive. Residents were provided with

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an explanation of the impact of the option and the associated saving and requested to indicate if they supported the implementation of the option.

3.0 WE CONSULTED ON THE FOLLOWING FUTURE PLANS

3.1 In relation to 'Customer Contact', residents were provided the following explanation of the change theme on which they were requested to provide feedback and comments.

"We have to be serious about moving our customers away from expensive ways of contacting us – targeting those who need face to face support. 'Customer Contact' means, basically, all of the different ways residents contact the Council or access services – either over the phone, online, through letters or emails or face to face at one of our hundreds of buildings. This work will conduct a thorough review of all those access channels, and make sure they are as cost effective and targeted as possible.

We will focus on moving as many services as possible entirely online – removing back office administrative costs, and making processes much easier for customers to complete. The Council also spends millions every year on various forms of information, advice and guidance – both directly providing it and also through contracts. We will again review all of this spend to make sure that we are getting the best value for money possible.

Wirral Council operates more libraries and One Stop Shops than any other borough in the region. We also have a fully integrated call centre, many buildings with reception desks, a website, social media channels and hundreds of phone numbers and email addresses which people use to access services and contact the Council.

Clearly, this is hugely expensive to maintain. Over the next twelve months we will implement a new customer access strategy – applying a strategic, whole-Council approach to how resources are invested in dealing with residents who contact us and access our services. This will completely remodel our approach to our call centre, how our website is used, our library operations and our one stop shops. We will also, over the next few months, implement an appointments system at many one stop shops – making the services more efficient, less costly and hugely reducing waiting times for customers."

4.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

4.1 Feedback received on the broad approach outlined in this area was relatively supportive and concerns were generally focussed on two main themes; internet access and service quality.

4.2 Responses were keen to see the Council implement more online access channels for services to ensure they were easier to access and find out about. However, many people expressed a concern that certain elements

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of Wirral communities will be unable to access or operate online channels – responses therefore sought some assurance that implementing online access would not completely remove telephone or face to face access.

- 4.3 Responses were also keen to see the Council invest in new technologies in delivering services but, similarly, were concerned that any such investment seeks to improve the quality and accessibility of a service as well as making it more efficient and cheaper to operate.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Residents were then provided with the budget proposal from the Chief Executive in this area to comment on. This proposal is provided below together with the public feedback which has been received.

Option: Community Libraries

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
411	-	411

Wirral is now one of the only Councils in the North West to not close any libraries. We believe this is the right decision as libraries play a hugely important role in any community. However, maintaining 24 libraries in their current form in a borough as small as Wirral is clearly not possible in the current financial climate. This option would see our smaller, less well used libraries, 15 in total; reduce their opening hours to 2 days per week, 10am-4pm. This option would NOT affect central libraries or libraries with One Stop Shop facilities included.

These hours would be implemented on an alternate basis – so that on any given day, at least one library in a constituency area would be open. This option brings the benefit of major savings, while at the same time keeping all 24 of Wirral's libraries in operation. It also gives us the opportunity to actively seek community involvement to potentially increase the libraries opening times and use in the future – rather than closing the facilities permanently.

Analysis confirms customer demand across these sites currently peaks during 10am – 12pm and 2pm – 4pm with significantly fewer people using the libraries outside of these periods. It is anticipated that staying open at lunchtimes will encourage more use across a proposed 4 hour day.

Wirral libraries have approximately 52,000 active borrowers (average for local population) and process approximately 1,500,000 customer transactions (above average) per year. Other services such as public access IT facilities are also well-used (approximately 215,000 hours per year), especially in comparison with other local authorities across the country.

APPENDIX FOUR

Reducing opening hours in community libraries would obviously restrict this provision to certain times, though access would still be available from core libraries. Access via the website, call centre or home reader is unaffected by these proposals. Analysis confirms the current opening hours and number of sites is excessive when compared to actual demand and other councils. The trend over the last 5 years has also shown a reduction in the number of library visits.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	15.6%	868
Agree	38.3%	2131
Neither agree nor disagree	10.2%	570
Disagree	11.4%	636
Strongly disagree	24.4%	1359

A number of petitions were received in relation to this option, as well as letters and emails to the Chief Executive from residents and the Friends of Libraries' groups from libraries such as Pensby, Irby, Greasby and Upton among others. Petitions are referenced in the substantive report. A submission was also received from pupils at Hayfield Primary School, opposing the proposal to reduce opening hours at Upton Library in particular.

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