



Council

Budget Meeting

Supplement

Town Hall
Wallasey

20 February 2015

Dear Councillor

This supplement for the meeting of the Council to be held at **6.15 pm on Tuesday, 24 February 2015** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, should be read in conjunction with the Council Summons dated 13 February, 2015.

Contact Officer: Andrew Mossop
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AGENDA

6. COUNCIL BUDGET (Pages 1 - 16)

In accordance with the Budget Council procedure, the following Budget amendments were submitted to the Head of Legal & Member Services by 12.00 noon on Friday, 20 February 2015.

A. 1. Proposed Conservative Group Budget Amendment 2015/16 (Pages 1 – 9)

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

2. Proposed Liberal Democrat Group Budget Amendment 2015/16 (Pages 11 – 14)

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

**B. Proposed Conservative Group Schools Budget Amendment
2015/16 (Page 15)**

Proposed by Councillor Wendy Clements
Seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'W. Clements', written over a faint horizontal line.

Head of Legal and Member Services

CONSERVATIVE GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT 2015/16

Proposed by Cllr. Jeff Green

Seconded by Cllr. Lesley Rennie

Amendment to Cabinet Minute 136

Wirral's Conservative Group welcomes the success of the Government's long-term economic plan and believes Wirral Council too must take what action it can to lock in recovery, growth, more jobs and better wages.

We note that the Council currently has £142 million 'Cash at Bank' including £87 million in reserves and a further £17 million in General Fund Balances.

Wirral Conservative Group's long term plan is to deliver first class services, which are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of local people. Wherever possible we will do this through engagement with, and the empowerment of, individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services.

We will deliver a Council that:

- Keeps children and young people safe
- Supports the Government's Long Term Plan to increase private sector investment and employment in Wirral
- Reduces waste and keeps Council Tax low
- Cracks down on Benefit Fraud
- Unleashes the potential of all local residents to prioritise, design and improve the services that serve our neighbourhoods

Conservatives know that every pound the Council spends or hoards in its reserves and balances is money taken from the pockets and family budgets of hardworking Wirral Taxpayers and therefore it is incumbent on the Council to demonstrate it uses that money wisely and fairly in a way that is going to improve the lives of all of Wirral's residents.

The budget amendment we propose tonight will therefore result in a zero percent Wirral Council Tax increase for all Wirral residents and reinstate the Council's 'pensioner discount' to those living in Bands A, B, C & D aged over 70 who have contributed so much to Wirral throughout their lives.

Additional Expenditure

We note that today in Wirral there are a number of children reported as being at risk of child sexual exploitation without a nominated 'Catch 22' case worker to protect them.

1)	Invest, with immediate effect, £40,000 to employ an additional 'Catch 22' case worker to protect children at risk of child sexual exploitation	£40,000
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We note the Labour Administration's choice to make swingeing cuts to Wirral's network of Children's Centres. We believe a rushed consultation will do additional harm to this essential service and anything less than a three month consultation will be flawed.

2)	To ensure a full, extensive and inclusive consultation with staff the voluntary, community and faith sector and all stakeholders	£173,000
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Lyndale School

We reconfirm our commitment to all special schools in Wirral and we therefore draw attention of Council to our separate amendment designed to ensure Lyndale School remains open to serve some of the most vulnerable children in the Borough and will work with parents, staff and others to explore all possibilities for this very special school.

Dementia Services

The Government's National Dementia Challenge Work Programme superseded the National Dementia Strategy and focuses on 3 main areas: bringing about improvements in health and care, creating dementia friendly communities and improving research.

We are committed to improving the quality of services available to people with dementia and their carers in Wirral. This is a priority for us.

We note the Council's shared commissioning exercise with the Clinical Commissioning Group has resulted in a lack of providers and a potential serious gap in services for Wirral residents.

3)	To ensure high quality day services are available to dementia sufferers we will make an additional investment to commission high quality dementia services and, a one off grant in order that local care providers can offer quality care environments and improvements through innovation in local care and technologies	£246,000 £254,000
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Integrating Health & Social Care

In order to drive forward the long term benefits to vulnerable people and the sustainability of Council and Health budgets we will invest in a shared Programme Team with Health to develop an integrated Social Care and NHS Trust.

4)	To use the Remodelling Reserve to fund 1 X Programme Manager, 2 X Project Managers 1 X Programme Support to drive forward the integration.	£200,000
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Increasing Employment

We note the Administration's budget contains an additional £1.2 million of spending on welfare payments. We believe the Government's welfare reforms have demonstrated beyond doubt the long term route out of welfare dependency is through employment.

5)	Reduce the Administration's welfare spending by £300,000. Add to £700,000 from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and introduce a targeted employment initiative; providing six months employment and training (at the Living Wage rate) to long term unemployed and to those whose health has been a barrier to employment	£1,000,000
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We welcome the Administration's 'cave-in' to Conservative, Liberal Democrat, local business and resident pressure and its unceremonious U-Turn on car parking charges. However we believe the Council can go further to support our local shops and shopping areas, following the lead of the Coalition Government increasing the Business Rates Discount to £1,500 for retail and café units.

6)	Re-introduce the Conservative 2010 'Free After Three' initiative at all Council car parks and off street parking (with an evaluation after an initial 12 months).	£240,000
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Doing the basics well

Libraries are an essential part of local communities, they provide a safe place for those isolated within the community to meet and in some places the only link residents have with the Council. We believe the Administration's decision to cut £364,000 for library services has echoes of their ill-fated Strategic Asset Review and the subsequent Charteris report.

We also believe that all Community Library funding should be allocated to Constituency Committees for them to work with staff, Friends Groups and residents to determine local priorities and the opening hours most appropriate for their communities.

7)	We therefore re-instate Library funding in full	£364,000
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Wirral is rich in the number and quality of its local parks, gardens and open spaces. It is regrettable that the current Administration has ignored these much loved local assets. Conservatives are committed to establishing a long term programme, overseen by Friends Groups, communities and Constituency Committees.

8)	Establish a long term parks, gardens and open spaces improvement fund, allocated equally to each Constituency Committee	£400,000
	Rescind the Administration's increased charges to allotments, bowling greens and football pitches	£35,000

We note the reduction in the number of requests for the removal of large domestic items and the increase in fly tipping following the Labour Administration's choice to charge for the ERIC (Every Reasonable Item Collected) service, down from a peak of 18,000 calls to only 6,000 per year, since charges were introduced.

This amendment will therefore re-instate the large domestic items collection, recycle and disposal service (ERIC) as a free of charge service to Wirral domestic householders. The impact of this initiative on the environmental blight of fly tipping and recycling rates to be assessed after 12 months and this initiative be met from the Waste Development Fund.

9)	The ERIC service be re-established as free to all Wirral domestic householders	£400,000
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Conservatives are concerned about the level of fraudulent claims of benefits administered by the Council and welcomes the centralisation of the Fraud Team into DWP. However we believe that the Council will still require adequate capability in this area to crack down on any remaining benefit fraud including: Council Tax single person discounts, local Council Tax support scheme, Discretionary Housing payments, falsely claimed grants and procurements.

10)	Establish an Anti-Fraud Unit within the Resources Directorate	£60,000
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Council Tax

As the Government's long term plan is working, pensioners who have played by the rules, worked hard, paid their taxes and now find themselves on a fixed income should be provided with the support they need to enjoy their retirement. We disagree with the Labour proposal to remove the local pensioner discount to households in Council Tax bands A-D

11)	Continue local pensioner discount to over 70's households in Council Tax bands A-D for a further year.	£600,000
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Savings

We believe all elements of the Council; Councillors, the Council bureaucracy and Council staff need to play their part and do all we can to ensure Council spending is kept under control.

Delete the following items:

	As Trades Unions are wealthy organisations we do not believe the Council Taxpayer, or school budgets, should be expected to fund Full Time Trades Union Officials	£125,000
	Noting the Administration's wish to spend in combination an additional £1.2 million (£900,000 Local Welfare Assistance Fund & £300,000 Discretionary Housing Payments) this total be reduced, pro rata, to £900,000 and the resultant saving be utilised for the Targeted Employment Initiative	£300,000

	Reduce Councillors Training Budget from £36,900 to £6,900	£30,000
	Remove 'Alternative Support to Councillors' Budget and the free taxi facility for journeys to and from the Town Hall	£73,300
	Withdraw from membership of SIGOMA	£3,000

Whilst not providing a saving this year, we believe savings will be available in the future and that Council Officers should develop a detailed plan to reduce the overall number of Councillors by one third.

	Reduction of 2.5 posts from the 14.9 FTE Strategy, Policy, Performance and Scrutiny Function	£100,000
	Reduction of 2.5 posts from the 18.1 FTE Press, Marketing and Design Team	£100,000
	Reduce the Officer Training Budget and reduction in Organisational Development Staffing budget of £612,000 to £512,000	£100,000

Council notes the discipline and management of the Strategic Change Programme (SCP) delivered £10.725 million of cashable benefits in the 2010/11 financial year. The Conservative Group remains disappointed that the Labour Administration formed in May 2011 did not actively manage the SCP and the opportunity it provided to reduce year on year revenue expenditure during the year was ignored.

Following the failures of the Shared Services and Merged Services projects it would now appear the Council is only left with the 'Future Council' project which encompasses the 'Remodelling of Wirral Council'.

We are concerned that the ambition, discipline, rigor, risk management and political accountability required for this change portfolio is seriously lacking and the current approach has the danger of breaking any political consensus around the structural changes required to the Council. We therefore recommend the establishment of a Strategic Change Board on an all-party basis to be led by the Leader of the Council.

<p>We will vary the savings target to be delivered from 'Transforming Wirral Council' from £9.4 million to £10.4 million. We note this remains in the lower quartile of Ernst and Young's projections and therefore, by taking immediate action to strengthen the focus of this Change Programme it will deliver an additional £1,000,000 of cashable benefit over the next two years. To allow time for the project team to put in place the required project management oversight and rigour we will back load the savings.</p>	<p>£300,000</p>
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Balances & Reserves

<p>We note that the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government has recommended that Councils use their reserves for the benefit of local residents. Therefore following an in-depth analysis of the General Fund Balances and associated risk assessments we believe that a degree of duplication has taken place.</p> <p>We believe that if a prudent risk aware approach is taken the likelihood of needing all of the balances identified in 2015/16 is unlikely and that they can be reduced by 10% releasing £1.7 million to support the Budget Amendment.</p>	<p>£1.7 million</p>
<p>Reserves: We believe that the Remodelling Reserve rather than simply being used by the Administration to pay for redundancies and IT spending should be used to invest in delivering high quality and efficient services for the people of Wirral. The investment to develop an integrated Social Care and NHS Trust fulfils this purpose.</p>	<p>£200,000</p>
<p>Working Neighbourhood Fund (utilised for targeted employment initiative)</p>	<p>£700,000</p>
<p>Waste Development Fund (utilised for a free ERIC service)</p>	<p>£400,000</p>
<p><i>We note that this leaves £14 million in the Remodelling Reserve, £5 million in the Waste Development Fund and £16 million in the General Fund Balances.</i></p>	

Council Loans

Conservatives believe that the money raised from hard working Wirral Council Taxpayers should be used for the benefit of Wirral residents and not lent out to other councils at 'bargain basement' rates. We therefore demand that Cabinet instructs Officers to produce an urgent report on how these loans (£8 million) can be recalled and Taxpayer's money can be used for the benefit of Wirral residents.

For the avoidance of doubt it should be noted that this budget amendment will:

Keep children and vulnerable people safe

Financially protect pensioners over 70 living in Band A-D households

Reduce welfare spending and increase employment opportunities

Crack down on Benefit Fraud

Provide the tools to integrate Health & Social Care services

Unleash the potential of all local residents to prioritise, design and improve the services that serve our neighbourhoods

Reduce waste and result in a zero percent Wirral Council Tax increase

The Statutory Calculations and Resolution

It be noted that in accordance with Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), that Cabinet on 9 December 2014 calculated the Council Tax Base 2015/16 for the whole of the properties in its area as 89,344.9 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) ("the Act");

- a) £114,206,012 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2015/16 (item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:
 - i) £725,401,275 this being the aggregate of the amounts calculated in accordance with Section 31A (2) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates that will be charged to a revenue account for the year in performing its functions, that are required to be set aside for contingencies and reserves and required to be transferred from its General Fund to its Collection Fund in the year and
 - ii) £611,195,263 this being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (3) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts of income that the Council estimates will be credited to a revenue account for the year in accordance with proper practices, the amount of reserves that are estimated

to be used to provide for the items referred to in paragraph (a) above, and required to be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in the year.

- b) £1,278.26 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16. This amount being calculated as item R divided by item T (as above).
- c) that in accordance with section 36(1) of the Act that the following amounts are calculated for each valuation band in the area:

Wirral – Basic Amount Of Council Tax Per Valuation Band

A	B	C	D
£852.17	£994.20	£1,136.23	£1,278.26
E	F	G	H
£1,562.32	£1,846.38	£2,130.43	£2,556.52

These amounts being the amounts given by multiplying the amount calculated as the basic amount of council tax by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings in a particular valuation band which is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D.

It be determined that the amount set in (c) above as the Council’s Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is not excessive in accordance with the principles determined by the Secretary of State under section 52ZC of the Act (as amended) and that no Referendum to approve the Basic Amount of Council Tax is required. The principles require a Referendum to be held for any increases of 2% or above.

Wirral – Basic Amount Of Council Tax Comparison For Referendum

	2014/15	2015/16	Change
	£	£	£
Band D	1,278.26	1,278.26	Nil

To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council’s area as indicated in the tables.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside (figures are awaited)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (figures are awaited)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

That having calculated the amounts for Wirral together with the Police and Fire the Council in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Act hereby sets the following amounts as the total amount of Council Tax for the year 2015/16 for each of the categories of dwellings.

Total Council Tax for Wirral (awaiting figures for Police and Fire)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

Local discount under Section 13a of the Local Government Act 1992 (pensioner discounts)

That for the financial year 2015/16 the Council will ensure that a pensioner household (over 70) within Property Bands A-D will receive a 5% award against its Council Tax liability.

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 2015 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2015 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 Support. No pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Support will qualify for the reduction.

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LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – 2015/16 BUDGET AMENDMENT

Date of Budget Council: **Tuesday 24 February 2015**

Date submitted: **Friday 20 February 2015**

Proposed by: **Cllr Phil Gilchrist**

Seconded by: **Cllr Stuart Kelly**

Council notes the Cabinet recommendation and the proposals to restore the cuts in services in a number of areas such as community patrol, dog wardens, the Williamson Art Gallery and car parks. Council notes that these areas were included by Cabinet in previous budgets without sufficient assessment of their impact. Council notes that the targets set at the time have proved unrealistic in practice, caused unnecessary uncertainty, led to lack of continuity in service provision and stored up problems which now need to be addressed.

Council, however, considers that the opportunity has been missed to reconsider further service areas where past Cabinet decisions have resulted in further problems, most notably in the rushed reduction in library opening hours, mismanagement of faulty street lighting and reduced capacity to tackle the blight of dog fouling on our streets and playing fields.

Council believes that insufficient attention is paid to reserves and balances. Council has a duty to residents to ensure that these are regularly reviewed so that funds do not remain unused for lengthy periods of time.

Council, therefore, resolves that Cabinet Minute 136 be varied as follows:

1. Library Services

That **£75,000** be allocated from the Remodelling Reserve to enable the successful implementation of the changes and the transfer to a revised service. The Cabinet embarked upon an over optimistic timetable to reduce library hours. The strategy has risks, especially where there are no Friends' Groups, with the prospect that local people are frustrated and services withdrawn. The funding is needed to develop a more flexible approach and allow the Council to work with staff, library users and user groups. This approach should seek advice and support from The Reader Organisation as appropriate. In addition to this one-off funding, Council recognises that the timescale for the implementation of the proposed operating pattern for libraries is ambitious and, to be successful, the changes need to be implemented in a timely manner. Council also notes that within General Fund balances, there is an amount set aside to cover delays in the implementation of budget savings.

2. Street Lighting

Council believes that **£30,000** should be identified for the re-introduction of night time scouting inspections. Since the removal of night time scouting, Streetscene has relied on the public to report lights that were out. However, this has caused further confusion. This funding is required in order to resolve this uncertainty and to ensure that stability can be brought to the street lighting service. It would also enable accurate monitoring of the contractor's performance in maintaining the street lighting service.

3. **Public Health & Healthy Homes Scheme**

Council notes that the Public Health Budget has £195,579 of uncommitted resources. Council recalls that the Cabinet reduced the successful Healthy Homes Scheme budget which enabled people to improve their heating systems and their health. Council believes that **£102,234** removed by Cabinet in July 2014 should be restored to continue to tackle fuel poverty from this uncommitted resource, with a particular emphasis on poor housing within the areas designated for selective licensing. In addition, funds should be released from this uncommitted resource to address social isolation.

4. **Local Welfare Assistance / Discretionary Housing Payments**

Council notes that the review of reserves highlighted the balance of £760,898 in the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. This has been the position for some time. Council believes that, in the absence of properly developed proposals for its use, **£300,000** can be released to augment the £900,000 funding identified for Local Welfare Assistance and to provide further flexibility in awarding Discretionary Housing Payments.

5. **Anti-Social Behaviour – joined-up working**

Council welcomes the steps being taken to tackle anti-social behaviour, especially the intervention activities with youth. However, Council calls upon the Cabinet to re-examine whether expenditure on internal structures of Council officers and co-ordinators might be better spent by being allocated to the Police and managed by mutual agreement. Proposals to bring the Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour teams together have been in development for some time and need the appropriate powers to make effective use of the money. Officers are requested to bring a report to Cabinet on how this project could be taken forward and funded from the Remodelling Reserve.

6. **Cleaning Up Wirral**

Council notes the restoration of part of the 2013 cuts to the Dog Warden Service but believes that the full saving should be restored (**£60,000**) to enable the service to operate at full strength once again. Council believes that the appointment of additional dog wardens can only work effectively if the Council actually gets the Public Space Protection Orders in place. Lessons need to be learned from the reduction and restoration of this team. Council needs to ensure that the various enforcement services cooperate and work effectively to improve the environment. Funding provided for 2015/16 will be subject to review for future years and will be met from the Waste Development Fund.

7. **Highway Maintenance / Safety**

Council welcomes the substantial funds being allocated for Highway Maintenance by the Coalition Government; £3,305,000 in 2015/16 with substantial additional funds available through till 2020/21. Council also welcomes the £2 million of Council investment 2015/18 into the highways infrastructure.

Council notes the substantial resources expected from the sale of assets at Acre Lane and requests Cabinet to allocate **£500,000** from this capital to be divided between the Constituency Committees to tackle concerns raised by local residents so that, for example, road widening and road safety can be prioritised and programmes drawn up by them.

Council approves the statutory calculations associated with the decision to accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant and there be no increase in the Wirral Council Tax element for 2015/16.

The Statutory Calculations and Resolution

It be noted that in accordance with Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), that Cabinet on 9 December 2014 calculated the Council Tax Base 2015/16 for the whole of the properties in its area as 89,344.9 (Item T in the statutory formula).

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Total Council Tax for Wirral (awaiting figures for Police and Fire)

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Date of Meeting: Tuesday 24th February 2015
Amendment: Item 6B Schools Budget 2015 / 2016
Cabinet Minute 145 refers
Proposed by: Councillor Wendy Clements
Seconded by: Councillor Paul Hayes

The Lyndale School

Council recognises the unique and caring environment provided by The Lyndale School to children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Council acknowledges the value of this facility and affirms its belief that such provision should remain at The Lyndale School

Council, having regard to the overwhelming support given to the campaign to keep The Lyndale School open by the public of Wirral recognises that The Lyndale School should remain open and wishes to bring to an end the anguish and uncertainty that has been heaped on pupils and their parents and carers throughout this whole sorry saga.

Accordingly, Council requests Cabinet to issue a Revocation Notice to consult on proposals to stop all current and planned action being taken to close The Lyndale School immediately. Should this be approved, Cabinet is further requested to instruct officers to commence negotiations with the Schools Forum and other relevant stakeholders in relation to the High Needs Funding Formula so as to identify and secure adequate funding to enable The Lyndale School to remain open from 1 April 2016. The revised High Needs Funding Formula shall be expressly detailed in the Schools Budget for 2016/17.

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