



Council

Budget Supplement

Town Hall
Wallasey

25 February 2011

Dear Councillor

Attached are the additional papers for the meeting of the Council **6.15 pm on Tuesday, 1 March 2011** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey

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AGENDA

5. **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL (Pages 1 - 22)**

On a motion by the Leader of the Council, to approve recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 21 February 2011 (attached), subject to consideration of any amendments received in accordance with Standing Order 7(2) or Standing Order 13 (Budget Council Procedure) - see item 6 below.

If the proposed budget is amended, wholly or partly, that will be regarded as an in-principle decision, which will automatically come into effect five working days from the date of that decision, unless the Leader of the Council informs the Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management in writing within that time that he objects to the decision becoming effective and provides reasons why. In that case, the Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management will call another meeting of the Council within a further five days (for which a reserve date has been set, namely 9 March). The Council will then be required to reconsider its decision, and the Leader's written submission. At that

second meeting the Council can:

- (i) accept the Cabinet's recommendation, without amendment or objection; or
- (ii) approve a different decision which does not accord with the recommendation of the Cabinet

by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.

6. MATTERS FOR DEBATE (Pages 23 - 44)

Pursuant to Standing Order 5(1)(m), and in accordance with Standing Order 5(3), to consider any objections or amendments to minutes submitted under Standing Orders 7(2) and 13.

The procedure for the meeting having been approved by the Cabinet is attached, as are the list of matters for debate.

In accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Director of Finance will submit (separately) a written report on each set of proposals, giving his view on their robustness. The Budget Summary on the Labour Group Proposal will also be circulated separately.

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

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

CABINET

Monday, 21 February 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	JE Green (Chair)	Finance and Best Value
	Councillors	S Holbrook C Blakeley S Clarke D Elderton G Gardiner A Hodson I Lewis R Moon L Rennie	Corporate Resources Housing and Community Safety Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Culture, Tourism and Leisure Environment Regeneration and Planning Strategy Community and Customer Engagement Social Care and Inclusion Streetscene and Transport Services
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	T Anderson A Bridson G Davies P Davies G Ellis S Foulkes P Gilchrist J Hale M Johnston AER Jones P Kearney	D Knowles D McCubbin AR McLachlan C Meaden S Mountney A Pritchard D Roberts L Rowlands J Salter J Stapleton S Taylor

325 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Green declared a personal interest in respect of Minute No. 328 - Schools Budget - by virtue of his wife being a Wirral teacher.

326 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3 February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

327 COUNCIL BUDGET 2011-12

The Director of Finance presented the draft revenue estimates for 2011/12. A decision was required to enable recommendations to be made to the Council concerning the budget and Council Tax for 2011/12.

Councillor J Green in moving the Cabinet's Budget Proposal for 2011/12 reported as follows:

“This is a time of huge change, challenge and opportunity. We all recognise that the national debt crisis has had a significant impact on the way that everyone who delivers public services will do business in the future. Wirral Council has risen to the challenge and put in place changes that have led to a stronger, more open and honest Council delivering better services.

Every pound the Council spends running itself is a pound not available to spend on residents priorities. Wirral residents said they wanted us to reduce management costs and we have made good progress in this area, repairing and driving forward the Strategic Change Programme and examining every area of Council business to make sure that we are making the best use of every resource available to us. This has included reducing absence amongst staff, reducing costly office accommodation and cutting our administrative burden. We have reduced the number of Senior Managers we employ by a quarter - to date we have cut management costs saving £13.6 million over the next five years.

Our focus on driving down the cost of running the Council has enabled us to produce a budget that protects delivery of services on the ground. By reducing management costs and what we spend on administration we have been able to ensure we continue to deliver the services that matter the most. In addition it has enabled us to invest further where necessary to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society.

Jobs matter and the prudent steps we have taken will ensure that we can continue to support our local employers to create job opportunities, particularly for our young people to rebalance our local economy for the benefit of families in every part of Wirral.

The successful implementation of the budget and policy strategy laid out immediately following the formation of our Administration has ensured that we have avoided the crisis management seen in other local authorities and have delivered a **0% rise in the Council Tax for Wirral residents**. We also recognise the burden that would be placed on those with modest fixed incomes by a rise in Council Tax and we have therefore **maintained Council tax relief for over 75s** ensuring that no Wirral resident will see their Council Tax rise this coming year.

Cutting the cost of Council administration

Through our commitment to making every pound of the public’s money matter we note that the following savings have been identified:

Savings previously agreed by Council

Early Voluntary Retirement & Voluntary Severance	£24.3 million
Additional saving arising directly from the consultation exercise	£0.691 million
Strategic Change Programme	£10.725 million
Every Pound Matters	£12.3 million

The Administration has continued to examine all reserves and departmental budgets for further savings opportunities and have identified the following further savings:

New savings

Consequential non staff cost savings arising from Early Voluntary Retirement & Voluntary Severance programme	£300,000 savings to the Council's car allowance bill £200,000 savings to the Council's office supplies bill £250,000 additional pay bill savings arising from overtime costs of staff who have left
Further development of the Council's Strategic Change Programme	£500,000 driving down what we spend on contracts
Every Pound Matters	£240,000 - from a 40% reduction in consultancy budget £1.075 million by Broadband re-phasing one off saving and aligning with the tender process £2.2 million Housing Benefit Reserve and Provision transfer to balances

It is noted that the Coalition Government has made an additional £4.9 million available to Wirral Council to be deployed, with the agreement of NHS Wirral, to support Adult Social Care where there is a health benefit.

Cabinet notes that in the settlement for 2011-12 there is no increase (or decrease) in school funding per pupil. The Administration particularly welcomes the £5 million contribution to the Schools Budget from the Coalition Government's pupil premium.

In addition and due to the effective use of the Efficiency Investment Budget over the last 10 months, £5.5 million of additional revenue expenditure is available to invest in this fund to support Council services through a period of rapid and dynamic change.

It is because of this Administration's commitment to achieve the maximum value from each pound of tax payer's money and the prudent management of the Council's finances that we have achieved a 0% Council Tax increase. Importantly we are able to ensure that the things residents have told us matter the most will be part of the Council's ongoing budget. In addition where we have found one-off savings, this money will be invested in projects for the forthcoming year that will further enrich people's lives."

Councillor J Green informed that he was presenting a balanced budget and this was the first time he could remember the Council reaching this stage of the year in such a position. The Director of Finance concurred with Councillor Green on this.

In seconding the Motion and endorsing the Leader's remarks, Councillor S Holbrook informed that this was a positive budget, which reflected people's priorities and maintained and improved the quality of service. This was the result of the hard work of dedicated staff, committed to protecting services Wirral residents valued most and due to the feedback from the public. There would be no significant impact to front

line services, a balanced budget had been achieved without any compulsory redundancies.

Councillor J Green placed on record his thanks to the Deputy Leader and his colleagues for their help and effort in preparing this budget.

Councillor L Rennie thanked the Leader on behalf of the Cabinet. She informed that the Council had now turned a corner and this was exceptionally good for the residents of Wirral. With a 0% increase in Council Tax the Council was still maintaining enhanced services at a difficult time in local government.

Councillor Lewis made reference to the important initiative in place to combat dog fouling, the Council's recycling project and the Council's commitment to Early Years.

Councillor G Gardiner referred to the package of environmental measures in place to help reduce Wirral's carbon footprint.

Councillor J Green placed on record his thanks to Councillor Gardiner for her absolute commitment to the environment and to reducing the carbon footprint.

Councillor J Green also thanked the Director of Finance and his Team for all of their hard work and support and the Interim Chief Executive for the work he and his entire team had done to assist the budget making process.

RESOLVED: That

Your FAMILY: Services for Children and Young People

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

Caring for our most vulnerable children

It be noted that an additional £1 million has been placed in the Council's base budget to supplement and enhance the Government's new Early Intervention Grant to:

- Give the highest priority to protecting, promoting and enhancing Sure Start and our Children's Centres. This means in Wirral there will be no reduction in the overall Sure Start budget: **£700,000**.
- We are committed to continuing the excellent work undertaken by the Council and a range of partners from across the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector to support and raise the aspirations of disabled children: **£300,000**.

In addition

- The Administration is aware of the potential impact on schools budgets from the effects of outstanding equal pay claims. To protect the education of all Wirral children, and spending in our class rooms, we will make a contribution to the costs of equal pay in schools from the equal pay reserve: **£1 million**.
- We will enhance every Sure Start Centre, enabling our dedicated staff to offer even more opportunities for the children and families they serve during 2011-2012. This will include an additional £2,000 grant for every Centre to buy new equipment and offer additional enriching activities and experiences for families: **£32,000**.
- Residents who provide foster care opportunities for children to be brought up in a safe and caring environment deserve all the support we can provide. Our residents provided the highest response of all as part of the Wirral's Future consultation when asked to suggest ideas about how more carers could be recruited. We are therefore ensuring that foster care allowances are increased in line with national recommendations: **£130,000**.
- We will invest to cover inflation costs of our independent residential care contracts: **£95,000**.
- Wirral Council is the parent to around 650 children who are in our care. Many receive valuable support and assistance from their peers on the Children in Care Council. During 2011-2012 we will invest further in a wide range of communication and engagement services to ensure we involve even more of our children in this activity: **£20,000**.
- The transition to becoming an adult can be difficult for many children who have been in care or who have experienced difficulties and chaos in their young lives. We will therefore protect the Stop Gap service which is an intensive support programme for Wirral's vulnerable, homeless 16-17 year old young people, who have complex or multiple needs: **£87,000**.
- Following the introduction of youth hubs elsewhere in the Wirral, we will provide the resources necessary to progress the development of the brand new youth hub facility in Birkenhead with the 'Onside' organisation, local youth partners and the Fire Service: **£50,000**.
- The Administration recognise that despite the significant amount of work that has taken place since 2006/7 through the Wirral Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, which itself has led to a sustained reduction in alcohol-specific hospital admissions for young people, Wirral remains one of the worst areas in the country for alcohol specific hospital admissions for under 18s. We also recognise the valuable work undertaken by our Trading Standards Officers to combat the illegal sale of alcohol to young people.

In line with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Access to Alcohol by Young People in Wirral, we will make permanent the Trading Standards

posts required to continue the work to control the illicit sale of alcohol to young people: **£40,000**.

- We are committed to tackling child poverty in Wirral, and in line with our commitment to consult, involve and engage, during 2011-2012, we will invest in targeted engagement with Wirral organisations and local communities to develop an action plan for Wirral with the aim of lifting children and families out of poverty: **£10,000**.

Your FAMILY: Adult Social Services

A key priority for the Council is to improve the quality of services we deliver for vulnerable people. This necessity was highlighted by the 2010 Care Quality Commission inspection report which found that our services were simply not good enough. A robust plan is now in place to ensure urgent and lasting improvements are made.

Wirral's Future consultation identified two key priorities for future delivery of services; **affordability and quality**

- We will therefore invest to ensure we have the staff in place with the necessary skills to provide rigorous quality assurance of provision for our vulnerable residents so that we can secure for them the improvements we have committed to deliver: **£600,000**.
- We also know that the number of older people in need of our care is increasing. The Adult Social Services Task Force considered this and recommended that budgets should properly reflect demand where the needs of vulnerable people are known. Therefore rather than expect the department to meet this demand within existing budgets we are increasing the budget of Adult Social Services appropriately: **£2 million**.
- The Council's support for children with learning disabilities is excellent – support that should be maintained as they become adults. We are therefore providing further investment into the support of young adults with Learning Disabilities as they make the transition from childhood to adult: **£800,000**.
- No one deserves our support more than the men and women who have served their country in the Armed Forces. We will establish an Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway to support the men and women we have asked to fight our country's wars by providing office accommodation and start up costs for volunteers to then signpost members of the armed forces, their families and local veterans to a range of support services with set up funding this year: **£20,000**.

Your NEIGHBOURHOOD

We understand that the most important influence on residents overall quality of life is the house and street where they live. We are committed to listening and engaging with Wirral residents and providing opportunities to get involved with the issues that matter the most to them. We know Wirral's environment really matters to local people and we are strongly committed to reducing Wirral's carbon footprint. We will

deliver improvements in recycling while putting in place further innovative energy saving measures to deliver on our 60% carbon reduction target by 2025.

- Wirral's Future consultation identified anti-social behaviour as a key concern to Wirral residents and it is vital that we provide the most effective action possible. We will conduct a full review of the Council's and partner organisation approach, including the implementation of our commitment to community justice in this vital area. Therefore we will provide funding to the ASB team for a further twelve months to enable this review to take place: **£290,000.**
- In addition, we will re-introduce daytime staffing of the CCTV control room at a cost of £60,000 to the base budget. Any additional income arising from increased issuing of fixed penalty notices as a result of the improved monitoring of CCTV will be directed to a community fund, with the proceeds applied to future community projects: **£60,000.**
- We will secure the provision of advocacy and support service for survivors of domestic violence coupled with the provision of information and intelligence to make Wirral communities safer: **£500,000.**
- The Coalition Government's new Homelessness Grant will be invested to combat homelessness, assist those facing re-possession, prevent tenancy fraud and reduce levels of under occupation. It will also be used to support the Citizens Advice Bureau assist residents facing problems in their housing: **£171,000.**
- We will make a significant additional capital investment to maintain and improve Wirral's roads through a programme of highway maintenance and road safety improvements: **£1.6 million.**
- We are committed to making our roads safer in residential areas and outside our schools by implementing statutory 20 mph speed restrictions in non-major routes in residential areas throughout Wirral. Any of the £275,000 committed to this project last year and still not spent will be rolled forward and added to a further £275,000 in 2011-2012.
- We will make a significant capital investment in solar energy on appropriate Council buildings. Such an investment will add to revenue costs however, the proposed investment will yield savings in energy costs in excess of the capital financing costs, result in CO2 savings of approximately 400 tonnes per year and provide a major boost for employment in Wirral's growing low carbon economy: **£2.8 million.**
- The Administration welcomes the success and the 30 local jobs created by the free household insulation initiative. We confirm our commitment to continuing with the programme to provide free insulation to every household in Wirral. Cabinet notes that £729,000 of the £1.049 million committed last year has been spent to date, and confirms that the balance will be rolled forward and added to a further £1.049 million in 2011/12.

- This Administration appreciates the valuable work undertaken by community groups and understands the financial pressures that make it difficult for them to invest in their buildings in order to reduce overheads. We will therefore add £57,000 to the balance of the Community Energy Efficiency Fund, bringing the total to £110,000. To widen and increase access to these much needed resources, we will also, as a matter of urgency, reduce the bureaucracy placed on voluntary and community groups by simplifying the application and approval process. These funds will be allocated to Area Forums for them to recommend to Cabinet appropriate schemes for approval: **£110,000.**
- The Administration believes the Assistant Recycling Project Officers have made a significant contribution to sustaining the improvement in Wirral's recycling performance and reducing the amount of contaminated recycling that would otherwise be sent to landfill thereby reducing the Council's exposure to landfill tax. Therefore, we will make the six Assistant Recycling Project Officer posts permanent: **£95,000.**
- We will also make a revenue investment in our waste infrastructure: **£202,000.**
- We note the success of the work of the Dog Fouling Enforcement Team, currently carried out by staff working through the Future Jobs Fund. The work of this team has resulted in significant reductions in dog fouling in targeted locations as well as additional benefits in relation to Streetscene such as litter enforcement. We will therefore establish this team, team leader and 4 dog fouling wardens on a permanent basis with an additional £10,000 to deliver extra enforcement activity at weekends: **£120,000.**
- To support the fantastic work of the volunteers and our staff who have worked hard to establish a Friends of Birkenhead Kennels Group, we will demonstrate the Council's support for their commitment and initiative by investing during the year to make improvements they have requested to the Council's dog kennels: **£7,400.**
- We will ensure our Streetscene activity is not compromised and that our contract delivers an excellent standard of service by meeting inflation costs on the existing contract: **£400,000.**
- We will invest in our vibrant weekend football leagues by investing £20,000 in the provision of equipment and pitch clean ups. We also believe that children's play areas should be cleansed at weekends so that they remain clean, safe and available for children at the times when they are most likely to be used. We will therefore provide an additional £40,000 to enable weekend inspection and cleaning work to be carried out: **£60,000.**
- We acknowledge the commitment demonstrated by our allotment holders and the support groups they have created. In recognition of this we will make a fund available for new and existing sites to bid into to invest in improvement works: **£50,000.**

- We welcome the security we have brought to our Leisure Centres by our swift actions this year and reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the existing scheme of free swimming at Council facilities for residents under 18 and over 60 are funded on an ongoing basis through the Base Budget.

We note that more than £1 million has been invested in Wirral libraries since May 2010. As this Administration recognises that Wirral's libraries are a vital part of our civil society and the public's commitment to them is part of what makes Wirral special we reject the approach taken by other local authorities and will not be closing any libraries.

- This Administration also recognises that our libraries are a major asset and are not solely about books. We will implement a communication and engagement campaign to promote Wirral's Library service across all communities, with particular emphasis on the most hard to reach groups in our society. During 2011-2012 we will aim to communicate the huge range of services contained within a library to encourage people – particularly those who are isolated, lonely or feel excluded from society - to utilise their local facility as a safe, warm and secure social space with provision to access services, search for jobs and training, improve literacy levels or to meet and make friends: **£20,000.**
- During 2011-2012 we will modernise the service our libraries provide to make them more attractive and equipped for 21st Century users by investing in the installation of wi-fi, information screens and a brand new e-book service in every library: **£120,000.**
- During 2011-2012 we will ensure that the 'Get into reading' project continues through investing a further year's funding in this important project. Building on our parenting role to the children in our care we will place a particular focus on promoting and improving reading to this group of Wirral's children: **£100,000.**

Your ECONOMY

We will continue to listen to and support our employers, investors and residents to secure our economic recovery. We will give priority to supporting our small businesses and making Wirral a place where business chooses to invest and create jobs. We will seek to achieve a rebalanced economy that retains and attracts our young people and provides opportunity for all to realise their full potential.

Crucially we will maximise our investment in the Wirral Apprentice Programme - guaranteeing even more local people benefit. We will also ensure that every young person leaving school has access to training or a job.

In December we announced an investment of £2.845 million to support the recommendations arising from the Wirral's Future Consultation. This included £500,000 to support a further 142 Apprentices taking the total supported to 313, £200,000 to link business growth with delivering jobs for local people, and £200,000 to support the development of social enterprises and mutuals in Wirral's economy.

Today we are able to announce further support for local businesses and the jobs they can create:

Keeping It Local Initiative

We know that Wirral's district and local retail centres are very important to local people as well as providing valuable local jobs. We are therefore announcing specific measures during 2011-2012 to support their 'bounce back' and assist them to regain their once vibrant environment.

- Following the success of the biggest ever package of reduced car parking charges over Christmas 2010 and to encourage local people to shop in Wirral all car parking, including on street, from Monday through to Friday will be 'free after three': **£482,000.**
- The challenges and issues of empty shops continue to be a problem for many of our district and local shopping centres. We note the early enthusiasm for the pilot projects in Egremont, Bromborough and New Ferry and will therefore, in consultation with local traders and Area Forums, allocate additional funds of £17,500 to address the issue of empty shops this is in addition to the funds already allocated: **£192,500.**
- To make our 27 local and district shopping centres more attractive places to visit, shop and do business, we will, in consultation with local traders and Area Forums, carry out a focussed programme of street cleansing including deep clean, gum removal, repairs and environmental enhancements: **£500,000.**
- From within the Council's current resources we will work with voluntary groups to assist local businesses identify low cost common sense solutions to improve access for people with a disability.

We will give additional support to Wirral's local shops and businesses by seeking to develop innovative publicity and advertising partnerships. This will be achieved from within existing Council press and publicity resources.

A thorough evaluation of the results and economic impact of our 'Keeping It Local Initiative' will be reported to an appropriate meeting of Cabinet.

Supporting our small businesses

Our Administration believes supporting Wirral's 6,755 small and medium sized businesses which together employ some 65,000 people is vital. Research has shown us it is these businesses which properly supported can provide the rapid growth and jobs needed to help rebalance our local economy.

- We will therefore provide dedicated business support and advice to all who have the potential to grow, helping them to identify new business opportunities and access new markets.

- We will also develop a Wirral Business Angels programme whilst further developing and enhancing business workshops delivered through Invest Wirral.

This initial two year investment will ensure an additional 100 jobs are created or safeguarded this year and an additional £2 million invested over and above agreed annual targets: **£250,000**.

- During 2011-2012 the Council will via a successful European Social Fund bid matched from the Working Neighbourhood reserve, invest to support over 700 people currently without jobs who have experienced ill health and other complex problems: **£1.5 million**.

The Administration welcomes the fact that unlike other neighbouring Authorities, and consistent with our experience of what achieves the best outcomes, we have chosen to deliver this activity through voluntary, community and faith sector organisations utilising their experience and links into our communities and with the hardest to reach groups in Wirral.

Taken together the measures announced in this section of our budget proposal and economic regeneration activity in the next 12 months will help create or safeguard 925 jobs and secure some £16 million of additional private sector investment.

Your COUNCIL

As a 'can-do' Council, we want to be the best we can. Our aim is to deliver first class services, which are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of local people. Wherever possible we will do this through listening to, engagement with and the empowerment of individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services, and by working together with partners in the public, private, community, voluntary and faith sectors.

This Administration will invest in and enhance Wirral's Big Society. The Community, Voluntary and Faith sector in Wirral deliver a wide range of services and activities for local people. This includes direct delivery of services for the most vulnerable, advocacy and advice services along with many community-led activities which have a huge impact and make a really positive impact to people's quality of life.

Unlike neighbouring authorities, we will continue to maintain our investment of around **£11 million**, commissioning services from the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector and providing grants to local organisations. As part of our drive to ensure everything we do is open and transparent we will publish full details of this funding. The dedicated Big Society Unit, established in December 2010, will work with the sector to ensure that a clear funding strategy is put in place which will support the Council to deliver its priorities, provide high-quality local services and enable local organisations to develop and grow.

This Administration believes that a key element of Wirral's Big Society is involving residents in determining Council priorities and giving local residents the opportunity to make real decisions on matters affecting their neighbourhood.

Wirral's Future be a part of it has been a huge success enabling Wirral people to get involved in reshaping Council services and deciding what their Councils priorities are after all. We therefore request that the interim Chief Executive takes all necessary steps, within current resources, to initiate the next phase of Wirral's Future consultation programme for 2011/12 to further embed our Administrations approach of listening, engaging and consulting with our residents.

Our eleven Area Forums are a real strength for Wirral and have been actively involved in distributing funding and helping to set local priorities. Their activities have improved neighbourhoods and communities. We will continue to support and enhance the important role they play by:

- Area Forums will be supported to more robustly influence the way in which we invest our resources in the future. Each Forum will be assisted to develop their own Local Plan with £5,000 provided to each this year to help them to organise community consultation: **£55,000.**
- We recognise Area Forum funding has been distributed in previous years from a variety of sources including one off policy options. This includes, Funds for You – voluntary, community and faith sector grants of £170, 000, You Decide funding of £220, 000 and winter resilience funding of £55,000. We note this totals £445, 000 equating to £40, 500 per Area Forum. This investment will now be safeguarded. In addition, this year we will distribute £200,000 for local road safety schemes as identified by each Area Forum. The Administration will work to increase the transparency and simplify the distribution of all the resources identified: **£645,000.**
- Recognising the value our residents place upon demonstrating their commitment to ethical and responsible trade we will provide resources for a Wirral wide Fair Trade project involving schools, businesses and faith groups, to increase awareness and enhance the Borough's existing Fair Trade status: **£10,000.**

From April 2012, in line with the Coalition Government's democratising of Health Service funding, Public Health will integrate fully with the Council. With full support from all of our Wirral Health partners, including the three Pathfinder GP Commissioning Consortia, Wirral has applied for early adopter status to start the transfer of responsibilities during 2011. The interim Chief Executive will bring an early report to the Council's Cabinet which will detail the integration of Wirral's Public Health service with other Council services and outline the Council's role in fulfilling this new function which currently includes £22 million in public health service spending.

Council Staff

Our employees are the Council's most valuable resource as it is they who oversee or deliver services to the people we serve. It is therefore vital that we continue to improve the way we communicate with each other. We will therefore ensure all staff have an e-mail address and access to a computer. It is noted that this can be achieved at no additional cost to the Council and that by connecting all staff in this way a platform will be provided from which we can build a wide array of digital services for staff to reduce administrative and back office costs still further.

The Administration realise that to allow the 1,100 staff who applied to leave the Council to go will require leadership, imagination, commitment and resources to support the 5,000 people who remain if we are to ensure that the new ways of providing services are to be successfully and effectively achieved.

- The Efficiency Investment Budget will be used to meet the full costs of any restructuring and retraining requirements that have been identified by each Chief Officer. This funding will be released on the confirmation of an appropriate business case by the Strategic Change Programme Board. To meet the full costs of all restructuring requirements identified by Chief Officers: **£2 million.**

The Administration is also aware that 108 people working for Wirral residents have been working for the Council on temporary contracts for over two years. We believe that this is unacceptable leading as it does to unnecessary personal anxiety and financial insecurity. We therefore request the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to implement a process of issuing every member of staff who has been on a temporary contract in excess of two years with a permanent contract of employment.

In summary, this budget proposal has ensured that no part of Wirral has been left behind and that all of our residents and communities benefit from the Administration's prudent management of the Council's resources.

- **It will keep Wirral children and young people safe and improve their life chances**
- **It will put the most vulnerable members of our society at the heart of all we do as a Council**
- **It will support the creation of private sector employment and the rebalancing of Wirral's economy**
- **It will deliver long overdue environmental improvements to our local shopping centres**
- **It will deliver a step change in carbon reduction and improving our environment, while delivering a major boost to Wirral's low carbon economy**
- **It will foster Wirral's Big Society by changing the way we deliver services, giving greater power to all local residents to improve their neighbourhoods and by protecting spending to voluntary, community and faith based organisations**
- **It will deliver a stronger, listening, more open and honest Council with radically reduced senior management costs delivering better services**

No Wirral resident will see their Council Tax rise this coming year.

We have ensured that we enter the next financial year with balances of £14 million, a prudent approach that secures the Council's long term financial security and we commend it to the Council and the people of Wirral.

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

That for the financial year 2011/12 the Council will ensure that no pensioner household over 75 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

- (i) the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 75 or over on 1 April 2011 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2011 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);
- (ii) this reduction will be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;
- (iii) application must be made for the reduction where it is not currently in payment or the potential claimant is not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit;

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

It be noted that, at its meeting on 9 December 2010 the Council calculated the figure of 104,879 as its council tax base for the year 2011/12 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, made under Section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2011/12 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Collection Fund (Council Tax Benefit) (England) Direction 2002:-

- (a) £833,250,000 being the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (c) of the Act;
- (b) £541,706,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3) (a) to (c) of the Act;
- (c) £291,544,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;
- (d) £160,110,000 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-Domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant, adjusted for the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year between its Collection Fund and its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and any amount which the Council

estimates to be transferred between its Collection Fund and its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) Directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, issued on 7 February 1994;

- (e) £1,253.20 being the total amount at (c) less the amount at (d), divided by the council tax base, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;

Wirral Services Valuation Bands

A £835.47	B £974.71	C £1,113.96	D £1,253
E £1,531	F £1,810.18	G £2,088.67	H £2,506.40

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

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

It be noted that for the year 2011/12 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts of precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Fire Valuation Bands

A £43.18	B £50.38	C £57.57	D £64.77
E £79.16	F £93.56	G £107.95	H £129.54

Police Valuation Bands

A £97.49	B £113.73	C £129.98	D £146.23
E £178.73	F £211.22	G £243.72	H £292.46

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts for Wirral services and the Fire and Police precepts, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of council tax for the year 2011/12 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

Wirral Council Valuation Bands

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

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

WIRRAL COUNCIL
SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES
CABINET BUDGET PROPOSAL

	BASE ESTIMATED 2010 £	CURRENT ESTIMATED 2010 £	BASE ESTIMATE 2011/12 £
EXPENDITURE			
Departmental Budgets	309,262,300	302,247,200	267,861,600
Merseytravel	27,344,000	27,344,000	28,817,000
Local Pay Review	1,130,800	956,300	956,300
LABGI & LAA Grants	(1,600,000)	0	0
Council Tax Freeze Grant	0	0	(3,285,000)
Contribution to fund EVR/VS Scheme	0	2,600,000	4,400,000
Net Budget	336,137,100	333,147,500	298,749,900
Contribution from balances	(4,354,000)	(3,919,400)	(2,805,900)
Contribution from balances (EVR/VS)	0	(2,600,000)	(4,400,000)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	331,783,100	326,628,100	291,544,000
INCOME			
Revenue Support Grant	20,016,300	20,016,300	37,498,000
National Non Domestic Rate	137,844,200	137,844,200	121,312,000
Area Based Grant	42,725,000	37,570,000	0
Council Tax Income	131,197,600	131,197,600	131,434,000
Collection Fund Surplus	0	0	1,300,000
TOTAL INCOME	331,783,100	326,628,100	291,544,000
STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE			
General Balance	10,723,000	10,723,000	14,070,600

Adjustment (following 2009/10 outturn)	0	3,035,000	0
Contribution from Insurance Fund	0	3,400,000	0
Contribution from Reserves/Provisions	0	3,432,000	0
Budget contribution	(4,354,000)	(6,519,400)	(7,205,900)
GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH	6,369,000	14,070,600	6,864,700

328 SCHOOLS BUDGET 2011-2012

The Interim Director of Children's Services presented a report which recommended the approval of the Schools Budget for 2011/12. He explained that the budget required a number of changes to the Local Management of School Funding Formula and a new Early Years Single Funding Formula. Reports on these areas had been presented to the Schools Forum on 25 January 2011 and the resolutions were attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Schools Forum reports were available on the Council's intranet for Members' information.

Councillor S Clarke in endorsing the Schools Budget thanked Wirral Schools for the approach they had adopted to the process. She welcomed the pupil premium which maximised resources for Wirral.

Councillor J Green seconded the Motion and placed on record the Cabinet's thanks to all staff, and in particular, Julia Hassall, Head of Branch (Children's Social Care) (who had delayed having an operation to assist with the drafting of the budget) for all of their hard work in relation to the budgetary process. Members were pleased to note that Ms Hassall was now making a speedy recovery.

RESOLVED - That

(1) taking account of the views of the Schools Forum:

- the Schools Budget is approved at the sum of £229,403.700;
- the DSG reserve of £742, 025 is used to meet backdated harmonisation costs in schools;
- the Excess Balance Reserve of £136,934 is also used for this purpose;
- the increase in contributions to combined budgets including Harmonisation back pay £450,000, Local Children's Safeguarding Board £6,000, School Sports Partnership £25,000 and Discretionary Rate Relief £270,000 are noted;
- the budget for schools includes provision for pay harmonisation "going forward" for support staff totalling £1,057,000;

- (2) changes to the local funding formula are agreed for:
- grants estimated at £32.2 million, which are to be consolidated into the formula using the previous grant make up and the latest data available;
 - an Early Years Single Funding Formula be introduced from 1 April 2011 using a single base rate for all providers together with a number of specific supplements for deprivation, quality, flexibility and a headteacher supplement (for Nursery Schools only);
 - that the operation of the formula be reviewed during 2011/12; and
- (3) the Cabinet notes that in the settlement for 2011/12 there is no increase (or decrease) in school funding per pupil. The Administration particularly welcomes the £5 million contribution to the Schools Budget from the Coalition Government's pupil premium.

329 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2011-14

A report by the Director of Finance set out the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2011 - 2014 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2011 to 2014 be approved;
- (2) the Prudential Indicators be adopted;
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision policy be approved;
- (4) the following Council Officers listed in Appendix D of the Strategy Statement, be authorised to approve payments from Council bank accounts for all treasury management activities;

Director of Finance	- Ian E. Coleman
Deputy Director of Finance	- David L.H. Taylor-Smith
Head of ICT	- Vacant
Head of Benefits, Revenue and Customer Services	- Malcolm J. Flanagan
Head of Financial Services	- Thomas W. Sault
Head of Support Services	- Vacant
Chief Accountant	- Peter J. Molyneux
Chief Accountant	- Robert D. Neeld

330 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL FINANCING**

A report by the Director of Finance provided the Cabinet with the further information requested at the meeting on 9 December 2010 when the report on Capital Programme and Financing 2011-2015 was considered.

Councillor S Holbrook informed that he appreciated the work that had gone in to producing the report. He noted the fact that the Council would be investing in Wallasey Town Hall which would allow more staff to work there, so increasing the use of the building and contributing to the accommodation strategy.

Councillor J Green informed that the Council's Capital Programme was a very important strategic tool that would be used to improve facilities to match the Wirral's Future Consultation.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the revised proposals for the Wallasey Town Hall and Wallasey Annexes schemes be reflected in the Capital Programme;**
- (2) an additional investment of £1.1 million in Transport schemes be included within the Capital Programme for 2011/12;**
- (3) the capitalisation of £3.42 million of statutory redundancy costs be included within the Capital Programme for 2010/11; and**
- (4) the Capital Programme 2011-2013 and capital financing, as now presented, be agreed and incorporated within the Council Budget for 2011/12.**

331 **INTERIM CARBON BUDGET 2011-12**

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management advised the Cabinet that reducing Wirral's carbon footprint was a key priority for the Council and that the Council was committed to its pledge to deliver a 60% reduction by 2025. In order to ensure this was met the Council had produced a Carbon Budget to measure the progress that had made.

Each Council service had been given an 'allowance' of CO₂ to operate and deliver their services. Its purpose was to provide a clear picture of the environmental impact of the Council's energy use, which would help it meet its carbon reduction targets.

The report provided an interim Carbon Budget for 2011 - 12, as requested by Cabinet on the 22 February 2010, (Minute No. 335 refers). Councillor G Gardiner informed that its 'Interim' status reflected the fact that significant changes to Council structures and services were currently being considered that would have a significant positive impact over the coming months. The Carbon Budget would therefore be revised to reflect any changes that were made and published in April 2011.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the actions (contained within Appendix B, the Carbon Budget Impact Statement) to implement the Council's interim Carbon Budget for 2011-12 be noted and endorsed;**
- (2) a further report be presented to Cabinet detailing the revisions to the Carbon Budget in April 2011;**
- (3) the proposed investment of £2.8m in solar energy in (included in its amendment to the Capital Programme) which will generate CO2 savings of around 400 tonnes per annum be noted, and this be taken into account when producing the further report for the Cabinet's consideration at its meeting in April 2011;**
- (4) the Merseyside Pension Fund be requested to give consideration to implementing carbon budgeting as part of its normal business activities;**
- (5) an appropriate evaluation model for quantifying CO2 emissions as part of the procurement process for new Council contracts and other spend be developed by the Director of Finance and a report be brought back to the Cabinet at the earliest opportunity;**
- (6) the progress on reducing CO2 emissions be included in the regular performance monitoring reports which are brought to the Cabinet and other Committees; and**
- (7) a briefing be arranged in the next Municipal Year as part of the Members' Training and Development Programme on the ethos of a Carbon Budget.**

332 BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE

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

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

The Director informed that the Budget meeting was clearly different from Ordinary meetings and, therefore, the procedure proposed was based largely on that used since 2008, the relevant sections of the Constitution and one or two suggestions made in the light of comments made in previous years. He made reference to his report and apologised for an error on Page 96. He corrected the line which read:

“The first vote on the Administration's budget, and if it falls..... “

as follows:

“The first vote on the **Labour Group’s** budget, and if it falls.....”

The Director also drew the Cabinet’s attention to the three Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings that would be held on three consecutive evenings during the current week. In the light of this, the Labour Group had requested that the deadline for receipt of its Budget Proposals be extended to 12 Noon on Friday, 25 February 2011.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) **the Budget Council Procedure as amended above be approved; and**
- (2) **the Labour Group’s request that the deadline for receipt of its Budget Proposals be extended to 12 Noon on Friday, 25 February 2011 be agreed.**

333 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

334 URGENT BUSINESS - ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management sought approval of terms for the occupation by the Department of Adult Social Care of part of Old Market House, Birkenhead.

The Director informed that the recommended course of action supported the strategic objectives of improving health and wellbeing for all by re-providing appropriate accommodation for the core headquarters team of the department. It also supported the objective of creating an excellent Council by facilitating the sale of Westminster House and a consequent overall reduction in accommodation costs. It was noted that occupying space within Old Market House would incur annual revenue costs. These would however be more than covered by annual savings in accommodation costs made from the sale of Westminster House. Entering into the proposed agreement was not a statutory duty. An exempt appendix to the report contained information that was not for publication under paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This information would remain confidential because it explained the current position reached in negotiations which had yet to be concluded between the Council and a third party, where a particular course of action was recommended. It also contained financial information relating to the affairs of the third party.

Councillor S Holbrook informed that because of the urgency of this matter, he as the relevant Portfolio Holder, had asked for the decision to be made by the Cabinet this evening rather than by him, under his delegated powers, at a later date.

The Director requested that because of the urgent need to enter into the proposed agreement call-in be waived. The Interim Chief Executive indicated his agreement to this request.

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the terms proposed within this report, for the Council to occupy accommodation within Old Market House, Birkenhead, are agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management is authorised to complete the necessary documentation; and**
- (2) the call-in procedure in respect of this matter be waived in view of the urgent need to enter into the agreement.**

335 URGENT BUSINESS - ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE

Further to Minute No. 333 above, the Cabinet considered the appendix to the report on the agenda for the meeting that contained exempt information that, if disclosed, may provide information relating to the financial/business affairs of a third party.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Appendix containing exempt information that cannot be considered in the presence of the press and public be noted.

COUNCIL – 1 March 2011

BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE

1. Mayor's communications

2. Declarations of Interest / Restrictions on voting

Note: a letter on what restrictions might apply has been sent to all members

3. Petitions

Note: if a petition relates to the setting of the Budget, the member who presents it should be given the opportunity during the main debate to speak about it, in order that the Council can take account of it in that context.

4. Matters requiring approval by the Council

BUDGET

The Leader will formally move the Cabinet's Budget recommendations, with any additional paragraphs (e.g. those relating to precepts), plus any other minutes from the Cabinet meeting on 21 February that require approval by the Council.

Minutes formally seconded (Councillor Holbrook)

Budget debate

There will be one debate on the Budget (Cabinet minute 327). Any alternative proposals to those of the Cabinet should have been lodged with the Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management by **12.00noon on Friday 25 February**.

The Leader of the Labour Group formally moves his Group's Budget proposals.

Formally seconded.

Any other amendments to the Budget recommendations are formally moved.

Each amendment is formally seconded.

Mayor calls speakers:

Councillor Green may request leave to save all or part of his time (15 minutes) until the end of the debate, in which case it will be added to the time for his right of reply (7 minutes).

Councillor Foulkes, speaking to Labour budget (15 minutes)

Movers of other amendments (7 minutes)

Note: if there are several such amendments, the Mayor should consider varying the order of movers to ensure a balanced debate.

Mayor will decide the order of other speakers (3 minutes each).

Note: Councillor S Clarke should be allocated 5 minutes by virtue of her speaking on the Schools Budget element.)

Debate ends with seconders, **unless** they have spoken earlier:

Councillor Holbrook, seconding Cabinet's budget (7 minutes)

Councillor P Davies, seconding Labour budget (5 minutes)

Seconders of other amendments (3 minutes each)

Leader's speech / right of reply (all or remainder of 22-minute allocation)

Voting:

The first vote will be on the Labour budget, and if it falls

The Council votes on any other amendments.

Decision

If all amendments to the Budget fall, minute 327 of the Cabinet will be **taken as approved, without the need for any further vote**, in accordance with Standing Order 7(1).

If the proposed budget is amended, wholly or partly, that will be regarded as an in-principle decision, which will automatically come into effect five working days from the date of that decision, **unless** the Leader of the Council informs the Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management in writing within that time that he objects to the decision becoming effective and provides reasons why.

In such circumstances, the Budget and Policy Framework provides for the Director to call another meeting of the Council within a further five days. The Council will then be required to reconsider its decision, and the Leader's written submission, within a further five working days. The actual position is that a reserve date (**Wednesday 9 March**) has been set aside for considering any objection by the Leader. At that second meeting the Council can:

- (i) accept the Cabinet's recommendation, without amendment or objection; or
- (ii) approve a different decision that does not accord with the recommendation of the Cabinet, by a simple majority of votes cast at the meeting.

Other objections

The Council will then debate, in the normal manner, any objections to other minutes that are subject to Council approval.

5. Vacancies

6. Any other business

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LABOUR AMENDMENT 1 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (15 minutes)

Seconded by Cllr. Phil Davies (5 minutes)

- 1. Council notes that this budget cuts Wirral's workforce by nearly 20%, and that, in order to make this cut, this administration has borrowed £6.4m, which will have to be paid back at the revenue cost of £600,000 a year, over a period of 25 years which totals £15m. This amount is in addition to the £15m being found from other sources over the next two years.**
- 2. Council notes that the loss of 1300 jobs, (of which only 1100 are accounted for in this budget) will take £51m directly out of Wirral's economy, with all the consequent knock on to contractors, traders and shop keepers, which will considerably increase the impact of that loss.**
- 3. Council believes that an area like Wirral, which is heavily dependent on public sector employment, has little chance of making up that loss with new private sector jobs, particularly in a climate where the private sector is already shedding the jobs it currently has, and that a cut of this severity, from one of the biggest employers on Wirral, can only push Wirral's economy deeper into depression, increasing the level of unemployment and reducing opportunities for future generations of Wirral's young people.**
- 4. Council believes that the policy of this government to pursue deficit reduction over such a short timescale, with its consequent impact on local government, is driven more by political election timetables and a political ideology which wants to drastically reduce the size of the State, than it is by necessity. Council notes that even under a Thatcher "There is no Alternative" government, they chose to reduce a budget deficit over a period of nine years rather than five.**
- 5. Council believes the damage done to the local economy has been compounded by the fact that the Secretary of State chose in the Local Government Settlement to front load in one year many of the cuts to Local Government spending, and that this draconian move was further exacerbated by a decision to centre those cuts, through the use of Area Based Grant, on the areas of highest deprivation in the country, leading to a situation where, for example, Richmond on Thames loses just £5.39 in Revenue Spending Power per head of population, Wirral loses £84.27 and Liverpool loses £162.99**
- 6. Council deeply regrets that Wirral's Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition has not joined with their colleagues elsewhere in the country in condemning this government's treatment of Local Government and its impact on vital front line services, but has**

chosen instead to celebrate the scale of the job losses they are inflicting as a triumph of leadership, without showing any appreciation of the damage they are doing.

7. Council further condemns the fact that they have taken every opportunity to thwart any attempt to scrutinise the impact of these cuts, unlike neighbouring authorities who have taken an all party approach to reduce the impact of any cuts that have to be made, and have gone to great lengths to conceal the real truth about what these cuts mean, including suspending elements of the Council's Constitution to suppress proper scrutiny and debate, and refusing to allow constitutionally called Scrutiny Committees to proceed.
8. Council notes that the outcome of this behaviour is that the members of this Council are being asked to approve a budget which has not been properly and rigorously scrutinised, which does not have in place any published departmental restructuring plans to show how services will be delivered in the future, and which does not have any published risk assessments or equality impact statements.
9. Council expresses its outrage that members are being asked to approve this budget "blind", without any of the essential back up information, and that they have not even been allowed to see the detailed departmental budget breakdowns which, in the past, have always been published as part of the budget "blue book" presented to Budget Cabinet as an integral part of the Budget report
10. Council believes this is totally unacceptable, that there is no evidence to show that this budget is either robust or deliverable, and that the failure to follow the Council's own Constitution on the budget procedure also renders it potentially illegal and open to challenge.
11. Council welcomes the fact that the residents of Wirral will not be faced with any increase in Council Tax, but regrets that the capping formula applied by the Secretary of State, combined with the financial incentive to set a zero Council Tax increase, effectively took away any choice from local people on whether or not they wished to pay even a small increase in order to protect vital services.

Council recommends that:

- Detailed Restructuring Plans, along with all relevant risk assessments and equality impact statements, be published as a matter of urgency to demonstrate how Council Services will be delivered in future in the light of the loss of nearly 20% of the workforce.

- The ban on allowing an in house bid for the PACSPE contract be lifted and timescales extended in order to allow a competitive bid to be submitted by Wirral's staff.
- The previous terms and conditions which applied to EVR/VS applications be re-instated immediately for any future applicants.
- Concessionary Travel for the over 60s is retained.
- Current levels of refuse collection are maintained and no new charges are introduced.
- In the light of the Draconian cuts to police services on Wirral, which include the loss of 325 officers and 163 police staff in this year alone, the posts of four Community Patrol Officers are restored at the cost of £110,000, using the fund for re-structuring costs, to run in tandem with the review of the Anti Social Behaviour Team.
- The Independent Panel on Members Allowances be asked to devise a sliding scale formula equivalent to a 5% saving so that those members in receipt of the highest allowance bear the largest reduction, and the level of their public sector income as a consequence of their role as a councillor is taken into account.
- No member be allowed to accept more than one Special Responsibility Allowance, including allowances from other public sector bodies.

Council notes that other major changes to the budget are contained within separate amendments in order to maximise the opportunity for all councillors to vote with their consciences.

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LABOUR AMENDMENT – 2 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327

Refocusing priorities on Wirral’s most vulnerable residents.

Proposed by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny (3 minutes)

Council notes that the provision of Respite Care, Intermediate Care and Home Reablement services plays a key role in the Council’s strategy for reducing the numbers of elderly and vulnerable adults who require full time residential care.

Council further notes that these services also play a key role in reducing unnecessary bed blocking in Wirral’s hospitals.

Council recognises that over time the introduction of the Personalisation agenda where individuals can choose how they spend the budgets allocated to them may have an impact on the services currently offered.

Council also recognises that, in line with many other authorities, it faces unprecedented levels of cuts in resources, that it is legally obliged to set a balanced budget, and that it therefore has to take action in order to reduce its expenditure to meet the limited resources available.

Council understands, however, that change can be very disturbing and destabilising for the elderly, for individuals with dementia, for those with learning difficulties and for those with mental health needs, and consequently for their families and carers, and that this change needs to be managed very carefully.

Council acknowledges the representations it has received from service users, their families and from charities experienced in this area that the Council is moving too far too fast and the consequence is growing levels of fear and confusion with the attendant risk, in some cases, that a breaking point will be triggered, leading to higher levels of demand for more costly residential care.

In response to these representations, and in line with the statement from the Leader of the Council that he wishes to “invest further where necessary to protect those who are most vulnerable in society,” Council recommends the priorities in the budget are re-focussed in the following way:

The HART service remains as an integrated in house unit	£760,000
Mapleholme stays open in line with the recommendations made at Cabinet in November 2009, following a lengthy and detailed consultation	£800,000
The closure of Pensall, Poulton, Meadowcroft and Fernleigh is postponed for a period of at least six months in order to ensure that appropriate and quality checked alternative services are in place and service users and their families have been properly	£990,000

consulted and are satisfied and familiar with any alternative arrangements that have been made.	
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In order to pay for this, Council recommends

Remaining Council Balances, following the implementation of the proposals in the budget and the use of 4.4m to pay for EVRs, are reduced from £6.8m to £6m, in line with the amount recommended as best practice by the District Auditor as a percentage of expenditure.	£800,000
In the light of the contribution of the Hart Service to reducing admissions to residential care, £166,000 is earmarked from the £2m allocated within the budget on page 5 to meet increasing demand for services for the elderly.	£166,000
In line with other services which are being asked in this budget to absorb £7.8m of inflationary costs, based on the current 4% increase in the consumer price index, the £400,000 allowance for inflation on the Biffa contract be removed. In order to avoid any appearance to the public of rewarding poor performance, particularly in winter weather, the Chief Officer be asked to absorb the consequences, with the suggestion that a more rigorous monitoring of the contract given past track records, and the application of penalties where standards are breached might prove helpful in this matter.	£400,000
In line with other areas where specific grant has not been replaced, the £202,000 grant for waste infrastructure be not replaced, but any essential needs be met from within existing resources of the Council or the contractor.	£202,000
In the light of real concerns that the implementation of the “Free after Three” parking scheme has been tested only over Christmas, when holiday shopping patterns are very different, and may well not increase trade but simply distort shopping patterns over a longer period of time, as well as changing the competitive position of smaller shopping areas like Bebington and New Ferry where shopping is still free, this initiative should be postponed until such time that a proper review of all appropriate consequences has taken place and the true cost or benefits of the scheme to Traders and the Council has been properly analysed.	£482,000
The Council’s new Big Society Unit be instructed to investigate how the deep cleansing of local and district shopping centres could be achieved under the principles of localism and the Big Society, by using the financial resources already available within Area Forums, or a combination of Area Forums, by recruiting willing clean up volunteers and by a rigorous enforcement by the Council and by residents and traders of current cleansing contracts.	£500,000

Council believes that these measures will not only benefit Wirral's most vulnerable residents, but will also make transparent the level of Health Authority Grant being paid back into Social Services, against a background of £13m of resources being removed, and demonstrate that the full £4.9m of grant is being used in the proper manner, (set against the £3.4m of grant currently evident in this budget.)

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Minority Report produced by Councillor Moira McLaughlin, Councillor Denise Roberts, Councillor John Salter and Councillor Brian Kenny following the special Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17th Feb 2010

On Thursday 17th February a special meeting was called at the request of the Chair of the Committee Councillor Moira McLaughlin, Councillor Brian Kenny and Councillor Pat Glasman.

The purpose of the meeting was to examine in detail the plans of the Coalition administration for Social Care in Wirral as agreed by Cabinet and passed by Council in December 2010.

The meeting was attended by about 60 users of service and their carers and heard evidence from the Cabinet Lead Councillor Bob Moon, the Interim Director of Adult Social Services Howard Cooper, in the form of statements and questions answered, and the meeting also heard statements from Gwen Seller, the Chair of Wirral Mencap, Sue Newnes, the Area Manager of the Alzheimer's Disease Society, Susan Walshe the Chair of Family Tree, Matthew Hawes an Occupational therapist with expertise in developing home Reablement services and Mr. David Johnston whose mother is a resident of Meadowcroft.

Written statements were also submitted from 4 parents of people with Learning disabilities who live in supported living accommodation.

The plans that were approved by Council in December were:

- 1. To reduce the fees paid by the Council to care homes by 9.5%**
- 2. To consult on the introduction of a "nominal" charge for the use of assistive technology for people with moderate care needs.**
- 3. The closure of 5 care homes, those being Meadowcroft, Pensall House, Poulton House, Maplehome and Fernleigh and to re-provide all respite care, residential care, intermediate care and support living accommodation by the private/ independent sector by 31st March .**
- 4. The disaggregation of the HARTS service with the re-ablement element being transferred to the private/independent sector by 31st March.**

These plans have raised real concerns for members and these have been re-enforced by the number of users and carers who have expressed their views through emails letters and phone calls.

The overwhelming concern is that these changes are being attempted on a scale which is too big to facilitate a safe transition of care and at a speed that has led to confusion and fear among users of service.

Both the Cabinet lead and the Interim director said that they felt these changes were a continuation of the previous consultation which reported to Cabinet in November 2009, a Cabinet of which Councillor Moon was a member, that they are essential to prepare for the extension of personalisation and that they were needed to address the issues where the service was judged as poorly performing by the CQC, by increasing choice and control, for adults with learning disabilities, and safeguarding vulnerable adults.

However the recommendations that were accepted by Cabinet in 2010 were significantly different from those now being implemented.

At that time it was decided to:

- 1. Extend the flexible respite scheme called Take a Break at Maplehome**
- 2. That bed capacity at Meadowcroft should be retained and there should be a re-focusing of day-care there incrementally.**
- 3. That there should be a re alignment of staff in supported living units to bring costs in line with independent providers.**
- 4. That further work should be done with NHS Wirral about future provision of services offered at Fernleigh.**

The timescale for implementation of these was set at the end of 2012.

Though there was an acceptance by the Interim Director and the Cabinet Lead that the consultation since January was not to the standards of best practice, both felt that the process was being properly managed, and that the outcome would be a better standard of service

However this feeling was not borne out by the experience of the users and carers who supplied evidence to the committee. They said that the consultation was rushed, chaotic and confusing, and it was provoking fear and uncertainty among users and carers.

Two parents of people in supported living units said that the consultation was of such poor quality that they felt that their son and daughter had had their human rights compromised.

Mr. David Jones, whose mother is in her late 80`s and has dementia, reported that he had been told that afternoon by the manager that Meadowcroft was due to close on 25th, but the Interim director told him and committee that she was wrong and that closure was still planned for 31st March.

Neither the Interim Director or the Cabinet Lead were able to adequately reassure members that the proper period of 12 weeks statutory duty to consult had been adhered to , as the first meetings with users and carers had not taken place until W/C 17th January, or that those involved had been consulted in a meaningful way, since even up until that night it was impossible to give information about how or where users would receive service in the future, with less than 6 weeks to go until transfers of service.

Re-assurance was sought about flexibility of provision of future respite services, and about continuity and stability. Questions were asked about the involvement of service users in selecting the providers, but apart from the assertion that no-one would be left without service; it was not possible to get specific answers to these questions because, the director said, the tenders weren't to be opened until 22nd February.

Committee heard the concerns of Gwen Seller, Chair of Wirral Mencap, Susan Walshe, Chair of Family Tree and Sue Newnes, the Area Manager of the Alzheimer's disease Society.

All stressed the importance of providing clear information to their clients during periods of change, and that change should be carefully managed in a controlled way, and over a timescale that enabled users to adjust to the change.

They stated that good respite care was vital for maintaining often fragile home living circumstances, and that flexible respite arrangements were needed to allow for emergency access.

For those suffering from dementia, the importance of familiar surroundings and carers are essential, and, for people with mental health problems, the therapeutic element provided at Fernleigh was often what prevented crises.

They all felt that these things were being ignored by the pace and scale of the changes, and they were worried that this would de-stabilise people.

Though committee members were not permitted to ask questions about finance, there was a clear view expressed by contributors that they felt these changes were being driven by the need to make savings.

Questions seeking guarantees about quality of provision were answered by saying the contract would address those issues.

On availability of provision, the Interim Director said that at any one time there was a surplus of care home beds on Wirral, and he was confident about availability.

Hard information was difficult to get, again because the tenders would not be opened until 22nd Feb., though there was confidence that there would be enough and of the right quality to go ahead on 31st March.

Committee heard from Matthew Hawes an Occupational Therapist who, along with colleagues Gill McGlade, and Gareth Purnell, all re-ablement professionals who have developed expertise in re-ablement.

Matthew, having looked at the proposals from the HARTS service expressed the view that he doubted that a full re-ablement service could be established so quickly and that the failure to do so would mean that individuals were unable to meet their re-ablement potential and could actually lead to a loss of functional ability, need for greater level of care and higher costs associated with that.

When looking at the staffing issues, the Director confirmed that about 500 frontline care staff would be leaving and the posts deleted. Committee were told that were there were vacancies in the establishments that are to remain operational after 31st March such as the Day Centres were a total of 35 staff are leaving, Girtrell Court were 27 staff are going and Sylvandale, were 18 staff are to go, these places would be filled by staff from the care homes, supported living units and HARTS who had not taken EVR or Severance. When asked about getting these staff re-trained, formed into newly established teams and familiarised with users in time to be operational by 31st March, the Director said that work had already started to re-train and team build and he felt the time scale was feasible, though admitted that in some areas staff may find it challenging.

At the conclusion of the meeting a recommendation was put by Councillor McLaughlin, and seconded by Councillor Kenny as follows

(1) This Committee is concerned at the breakneck speed at which changes are being railroaded through in order to achieve a reduction in the Social Care budget over the next year.

(2) This Committee believes that this money led approach to change can only be detrimental to service users, creating fear and confusion and undermining and de-stabilising the real process of change which until now, has been moving steadily towards the personalisation agenda.

(3) This Committee supports the introduction and extension of the provision of personal budgets to those users of the care service who want to have the opportunity to have greater choice and control over their lives, and accepts that this process is likely to bring about changes to the type of service required over time. Committee also understands the need to make best use of financial resources.

(4) However, we strongly believe that those changes and the pace of those changes should be dictated primarily by the changing demands from service users and that every effort should be made to create a means and pace of change that is manageable and acceptable to those service users.

(5) This Committee believes that the proposals for re-provision passed by Cabinet and Council in December, 2010 and due to be implemented by 31 March, 2011 are now being undertaken at such speed, and on a scale so big, that they fail to conform to the principles of personalisation. Committee is concerned that the way in which the December budget decisions have been implemented has failed to allow for proper consultation with, and involvement of, those who use our services and their carers, which in turn has created a climate of fear and confusion and a loss of confidence in the whole exercise. This in turn has created a much higher risk for individuals and increased the risk that the exercise will fail.

(6) Committee further expresses great concern over the viability of the plans to complete by 31 March the redesign of staff teams in Day Centres and residential care homes for the most vulnerable group of people with severe learning and physical disabilities. Committee believes that this leaves insufficient time to re-train redeployed staff to work in a very challenging environment, and to restructure services in a safe and appropriate way.

(7) Committee therefore asks that Cabinet delay any implementation to allow for proper risk assessments and equality impact statements to be produced, and to allow for meaningful consultation, and a phased introduction of changes in line with the decisions originally taken by Cabinet in March 2010.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Watt and seconded by Councillor Mountney, that –

Delete all the above motion and substitute the following –

“(1) That this Committee welcomes the opportunity to hear the concerns of service users, carers and the voluntary and charitable organisations who are affected by the current changes in the provision of Adult Social Services.

(2) Committee accepts the explanations and assurances given by the Cabinet Member and the Interim Director in response to the issues raised.

(3) Committee welcomes the apologies previously given and repeated at this meeting for recent shortcomings in communications with service users and their carers and notes the undertaking given that individual contact has, or is now, being made with all concerned.

(4) Committee therefore recommends to Cabinet that the current process of change should continue with all due diligence for the best interests of service users and their carers, ensuring that the quality of service is maintained or improved, and that a progress report be brought to the next scheduled meeting of this Committee.”

The amendment was put and carried (6:4)

The amendment, then becoming the substantive motion, was put and it was –

Resolved (6:4) –

(1) That this Committee welcomes the opportunity to hear the concerns of service users, carers and the voluntary and charitable organisations who are affected by the current changes in the provision of Adult Social Services.

(2) Committee accepts the explanations and assurances given by the Cabinet Member and the Interim Director in response to the issues raised.

(3) Committee welcomes the apologies previously given and repeated at this meeting for recent shortcomings in communications with service users and their carers and notes the undertaking given that individual contact has, or is now, being made with all concerned.

(4) Committee therefore recommends to Cabinet that the current process of change should continue with all due diligence for the best interests of service users and their carers, ensuring that the quality of service is maintained or improved, and that a progress report be brought to the next scheduled meeting of this Committee.

This was accepted by the Conservative and Lib/Dems members of the committee. However Labour members are not able to accept that this properly reflects the information given and concerns expressed by those making statements to them and so have produced this minority report.

The overwhelming conclusions are that the evidence heard shows that users and carers believe that these changes are being driven by the need to take around £13m out of next year's Social Services Budget.

That the scale of the changes and the speed of implementation are such that it is not being properly managed with the result that service users and carers have been excluded from a meaningful consultation, and therefore from the planning of their future care.

The supply of information to them has been inadequate with staff dealing with them unable to answer their questions and the process has been rushed and chaotic. This has led to confusion and fear among them and a loss of confidence in the process. For these reasons we believe the principles of personalisation have been undermined.

We also believe that the same scale and speed is putting users at unnecessary risk of service breakdown. It is for this reason that we have produced this report.

LABOUR AMENDMENT 3 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

Seconded by Cllr. Ann McLachlan (3 minutes)

Council demands that a full review takes place on the way in which applications for EVRs and Voluntary Severance were invited.

Council does not believe that it is appropriate to ask employees to take serious decisions about their future in a “last chance saloon” climate of fear, where pressure is applied to persuade people to go by telling them that any future settlements will be considerably reduced, and that a failure to reach the required number of EVRs or Voluntary Severance requests would lead to compulsory redundancies.

Council instructs the Employment and Appointments Committee to re-instate immediately the previous terms and conditions which applied to EVR/VS applications for any future applicants, pending the review.

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LABOUR AMENDMENT 4 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327

Proposed by Cllr. Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Cllr. Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Council notes that information recently revealed in the Times under the Freedom of Information Act shows that Conservative Council Leaders have warned the Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, that the Government's spending cuts will have "devastating" consequences on public services and complained about the unfairness of the settlement, with many Northern Authorities faring worse than Southern Authorities.

Council notes that this adds to the clear condemnation of the consequences of such a savage front loading of cuts made by Liberal Democrat Council Leaders and councillors in a prior letter to the Times.

In the light of this information, Council calls on the Wirral Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition to join their colleagues in this protest and lobby their own government about the unprecedented damage being caused by this savage slashing of Council resources in one year, with no time to phase in alternative ways of delivering services.

Council asks that this budget setting procedure be delayed until its legal limit on March 10th in order for this lobbying to take place and the full impact this budget will have on front line services to be set out clearly to government ministers in a last ditch attempt to prevent such damage being done to the people of Wirral.

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