



Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee

Date:	Thursday, 2 February 2023
Time:	6.00 p.m.
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

Contact Officer: Polly Price
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Please note that public seating is limited, therefore members of the public are encouraged to arrive in good time.

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION
2. APOLOGIES
3. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022.

5. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

5.1 Public Questions

Notice of question to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, 30 January 2023 to the Council's Monitoring Officer via this link: [Public Question Form](#) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 10.

For more information on how your personal information will be used, please see this link: [Document Data Protection Protocol for Public Speakers at Committees | Wirral Council](#)

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your question by the deadline for submission.

5.2 Statements and Petitions

Statements

Notice of representations to be given in writing or by email by 12 noon, 30 January 2023 to the Council's Monitoring Officer (committeeservices@wirral.gov.uk) and to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Order 11.1.

Petitions

Petitions may be presented to the Committee if provided to Democratic and Member Services no later than 10 working days before the meeting, at the discretion of the Chair. The person presenting the petition will be allowed to address the meeting briefly (not exceeding three minute) to outline the aims of the petition. The Chair will refer the matter to another appropriate body of the Council within whose terms of reference it falls without discussion, unless a relevant item appears elsewhere on the Agenda. If a petition contains more than 5,000 signatures, it will be debated at a subsequent meeting of Council for up to 15 minutes, at the discretion of the Mayor.

Please telephone the Committee Services Officer if you have not received an acknowledgement of your statement/petition by the deadline for submission.

5.3 Questions by Members

Questions by Members to be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders 12.3 to 12.8.

SECTION A - KEY AND OTHER DECISIONS

6. **COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER (Pages 5 - 22)**
7. **NEW FERRY RANGERS COMMUNITY CLUBHOUSE (Pages 23 - 30)**

SECTION B - BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

8. **BUDGET SETTING 2023/24 (Pages 31 - 112)**

SECTION C - WORK PROGRAMME / OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

9. **WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 113 - 122)**
10. **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The following items contain exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: 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 paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

11. **BUDGET SETTING 2023/24 EXEMPT APPENDICES (Pages 123 - 130)**
12. **COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER EXEMPT APPENDICES (Pages 131 - 402)**

Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this committee can be found at the end of this agenda.

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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 1 December 2022

Present: Councillor H Cameron (Chair)

Councillors T Smith J Johnson
N Graham J Grier
S Percy A Brame
KJ Williams J Laing
I Camphor T Elzeiny (In place
of M Collins)

Apologies Councillors M Collins

42 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

43 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mike Collins who was deputised by Councillor Tracy Elzeiny.

44 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest. No interests were declared.

45 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October be approved and adopted as a correct record.

46 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

There were no questions, statements or petitions from the public or Members.

47 **QUARTER 2 BUDGET REPORT**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee as at Quarter 2 of 2022-23. It was reported that there was a forecast adverse position of £3.948M, a portion of this related to an adjustment for the proposed 2022/23 pay award and was mitigated in part by the proposed National Insurance reduction from November 2022. The report gave a summary of progress on the delivery of 2022-23 savings with £1.403M actual savings delivered to date.

In response to Member queries about the £3M contingency fund which was set up for non-achieved savings by the end of the year, it was outlined that this fund sat with the S151 officer, and a bid would have to be made to access this if necessary.

Following a discussion on the impact of the sea wall at West Kirby on footfall at the leisure sites, it was reported that outdoor water sports had become increasingly popular and were not as affected as the catering offer.

Members noted the energy pressures and queried whether this could be brought down by reducing energy usage and referenced the Climate Emergency policy and action plan as well as behavioural changes needed to achieve the net zero by 2030 target.

Resolved – That

- (1) the forecast revenue position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2022-23 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- (3) the forecast level of reserves at Quarter 2 be noted.**
- (4) the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**

48 TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chair reported that the appendix to the report was exempt and if the Committee needed to refer to the appendix in their discussions, the press and public would have to be excluded from the meeting for the duration. The Chair noted that only part of the appendix needed to be exempt and requested that

the information be presented separately in future to ensure transparency with the public.

On a motion by Councillor Helen Cameron, seconded by Councillor Tony Smith it was –

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 item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services in its entirety.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

49 **LIVERPOOL AND WIRRAL CORONER AREA ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

The Coroner presented his report. The Coroner was an independent judicial office holder, appointed by the local authority. They investigated deaths reported to them if it appeared that: the death was violent or unnatural; the cause of death was unknown; or the person died in prison, police custody or another type of state detention. The report was the full annual report of the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area for the period of 2021.

It was reported that 2021 had the highest number of deaths reported to coroners nationally since 1995 and 24% of deaths in Liverpool and Wirral had resulted in an inquest. The Coroner highlighted the pressures of the additional post mortems and stated that Arrowe Park Hospital only had capacity to perform 6 autopsies a week which meant a forensic pathologist had to be brought in to provide cover and extra resources, in response to a Member query on the subject, the Coroner outlined that it was a matter for individual trusts to employ sufficient pathologists to meet the needs of residents.

The coroner addressed queries around contingency planning and noted that if there was a mass fatality disaster which required a temporary mortuary to be set up and staffed, the duty to fund this would fall on the Local Authority. The national emergency mortuary arrangements were detailed, and the coroner emphasised the importance of these arrangements as the North West did not have the facilities to deal with mass fatalities.

The Chair noted the importance of this and asked that the risks highlighted by the coroner be brought to the upcoming risk workshop.

On a motion from Councillor Helen Cameron, seconded by Councillor Ivan Camphor

Resolved – That

- (1) the report be noted.**
- (2) the reputational risk highlighted by the coroner’s report be considered at the upcoming risk workshop.**

50 **WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

The Consultant Lawyer introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and review its work across the municipal year.

The Chair noted that an item on the third sector was missing from the work programme and asked that this be brought as soon as possible.

In response to a request from a Member, the Assistant Director of Parks and Countryside agreed to circulate a briefing note on emergency planning.

Resolved – That the report be noted.



TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 February 2023

REPORT TITLE:	COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER FORMER LIBRARIES BRACKENWOOD GOLF COURSE BROMBOROUGH CIVIC CENTRE ASSET TRANSFER FORMER PUBLIC TOILETS IN MORETON
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

REPORT SUMMARY

This report makes recommendations in relation to the following Community Asset Transfer (CAT) and an Asset Transfer (AT) matter:

- Former Libraries (CAT)
- Brackenwood Golf Course (CAT)
- Bromborough Civic Centre (CAT)
- Former Public Toilets in Moreton (Asset Transfer)

It builds upon the CAT reports approved by this committee at its meetings on 16 June 2022 and 25 October 2022, considers the Council's approved Asset Strategy 2022-27, approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 9 November 2022, the priorities of the Wirral Plan 2021-26 and the emerging Local Plan with its "brownfield first strategy".

A report on the transfer of Hoylake Municipal Golf Course will come to a future meeting of this Committee once the proposal has been considered alongside the future arrangements for the Open Championship at Royal Liverpool Golf Club in Hoylake.

A report on the transfer of Woodchurch leisure Centre will come to a future meeting of this committee.

This report meets the following priorities in the Wirral Plan 2021-26

- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families.
- A prosperous inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations.

This matter has the potential to affect all wards.

This is a Key Decision

All the business plans, expressions of interest and the C.co report referred to in this report were submitted confidentially for commercial reasons. Therefore, Appendices 1 - 7 of this report are exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

- (1) Authorise the Director of Resources to:
 - (a) conclude the transfer of the assets of Pensby library to Pioneer People and Prenton Library to St. Stephens Church on the basis of the terms reported in the exempt appendix 1 to this report;
 - (b) enter into negotiations on the basis of the re-submitted business plans contained in the exempt Appendix 2 of this report to agree Heads of Terms for the transfer of the former library assets at Wallasey Village to the Friends of Wallasey Village Library, Irby to the Friends of Irby Library, and Higher Bebington library to the Co-op Academy Bebington. Once agreed these Heads of Terms are to be reported back to this Committee for a decision or onward recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee.
 - (c) explore other options for Brackenwood Golf Course which support the Council's Local Plan priorities and report back on these to this Committee in June 2023.
 - (d) market the site of the former Hoylake Library for sale or commercial leasing on the basis that it is surplus to the requirements of the Committee
- (2) approve the removal of the former Woodchurch library asset from the CAT process
- (3) Recommend to Policy and Resources Committee that
 - (a) Higher Bebington Library be appropriated by the Council for educational purposes.
 - (b) The former Woodchuch library asset be appropriated by the Council for educational purposes.
 - (c) The site of the former Hoylake Library be marketed for sale or commercial leasing.
- (5) Invite a business plan from Neo for the Bromborough Civic Centre on the basis of their submitted expression of interest and the officer assessment in the exempt appendix 6 of this report.
- (6) transfer the former public toilets in Moreton which have been declared surplus to requirements, to Moreton in Bloom, based on the information in the exempt appendix 7 of this report.

- (7) use £52,000 of the surplus revenue amount allocated to Community Asset Transfer to meet the holding costs of the former libraries in 2023/24 prior to transfer
- (8) retain the remaining revenue balance of £62,417 to support the library element of Bromborough Civic Centre if members decide to transfer this asset at a future point in the financial year 2023/24

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The recommendations within this report enable Committee to make decisions on the assets that are in scope for Community Asset Transfer (CAT). As part of the 2022/23 budget Council agreed the closure of 9 libraries, two municipal golf courses and a leisure centre. As part of the amendment to that budget, a Community Asset Transfer process was proposed to determine if any of these assets could be transferred in advance of being disposed of as surplus to requirements.
- 1.2 The report makes recommendations for transfer where the information supports that approach.
- 1.3 Where business plans are unviable, officers have re-engaged, with all those groups to explore if there are further steps that can be taken to create viable business plans based on the principle of exploring all options to secure CAT. The detail of this is set out in the report.
- 1.4 The recommendations contain suggested actions to be taken if viable business plans cannot be achieved so that members have all the information and options to make informed decisions on these assets.
- 1.5 Bromborough Civic Centre is at an expression of interest stage and the recommendation made reflects that.
- 1.6 The surplus public toilets at Moreton are a very local asset and it is recommended that they are dealt with under the Asset Transfer category (not Community Asset Transfer) as set out in the approved Asset Strategy 2022-27, approved by P&R Committee on 9 November 2022. This is because the former toilets will be used for storage to facilitate community activity in Moreton. Therefore, there is no community asset transfer as no community group will be occupying the former toilets.
- 1.7 All the business plans and expressions of interest have been submitted on a confidential basis for commercial reasons and therefore they are included in exempt appendices to this report.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The CAT process has been a primary consideration for this report which follows on from resolutions agreed by this Committee at its meeting of 16 June 2022, 25 October 2022 and by Policy and Resources Committee on 9 November 2022.
- 2.2 The Council, to meet its legal duty and fiduciary responsibilities, has to fully consider all relevant matters and options in making any decision, Therefore this report sets out these matters and options to ensure that Members have all the relevant information to make a fully informed decision.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As part of the 2022/23 budget, the Council resolved that several assets be considered for CAT. These were nine libraries, two municipal golf courses and one leisure centre. Expressions of interest were received for seven of the nine libraries. On 16 June 2022 this Committee agreed to progress several expressions of interest in a CAT transfer to the business planning stage.
- 3.2 Following this decision, a timescale was set to produce the business plans. An inception meeting took place with each of the organisations which submitted Expressions of Interest (EOI) progressing to the business planning stage. Information to support business planning was provided and regular check-ins with each organisation were undertaken as the business plans were being prepared. Support in the preparation of business plans was made available by the Chamber of Commerce and the Council signposted to other appropriate organisations who give advice and support with asset transfer.
- 3.3 The business plans were submitted to the Council on 25 August 2022. These were reported to this Committee on 25 October 2022 as an exempt item.
- 3.4 The Council is required, to meet its legal duties and fiduciary responsibilities, to consider several matters in making decisions in relation to CAT. In summary these include fit with the CAT policy, assessments of the business plans, strategic fit, alignment with Council priorities (including the Local Plan), due diligence on the organisations seeking a transfer, any property related matters, any legal requirements, financial implications and community benefit. In addition, it must also consider all relevant matters and options before coming to a decision.
- 3.5 The Council employed C.co (a company associated with CIPFA) to undertake an independent assessment of the business plans based on the information submitted. This document is attached as Appendix 8 to this report. Appendix 8 is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 3.6 This Committee, at its meeting on 25 October 2022 made a series of recommendations which, in summary, enabled negotiations to progress for a transfer of Pensby and Prenton libraries and set a timescale for unviable business plans to be re-considered by the groups and re-submitted by 9 December 2022.
- 3.7 The paragraphs below, summarise the current position in relation to each asset and provide the basis for the recommendations contained in this report. The table at paragraph 4.2 of this report sets out the indicative capital and revenue requests received from each organisation to support the transfer of the former library assets on the basis of the initial business plans (Pensby and Prenton) and on the revised business plans (Higher Bebington, Irby, Wallasey Village). Woodchurch Library and Hoylake are showing no funding requirement subject to the recommendations of this report being agreed. These sums will be reviewed and confirmed as these matters progress.

3.8 **Pensby Library**

Heads of Terms for a transfer of this asset have now been agreed with Pioneer People along with agreement of the capital and revenue sums to support that transfer. It is now recommended that this asset is transferred on the terms set out in Appendix 1 of this report. The alternative use for this asset would be a small residential development following demolition of the asset, but this would not result in the community benefits which will result from a transfer of this asset.

3.9 **Prenton Library**

St. Stephen's Church submitted a business plan to provide a range of community facilities in the library building. The outcome of the assessment is that this asset should proceed to transfer based on the business plan and the community benefits. In doing so, Committee are reminded that this asset is not owned by the Council but leased from Magenta Living by the Council and further discussions around these matters have been held with Magenta Living. The capital and revenue sums to support this transfer have now been agreed with St, Stephens Church. Discussions have taken place with Magenta Living regarding assignment of the lease to St. Stephen Church and this matter is progressing positively. It is therefore recommended that this asset is transferred on the terms agreed in Appendix 1 of this report. The alternative would be for the Council to exercise its power under the Lease to give notice of termination to Magenta Living so that the latter can negotiate directly with the Church.

3.10 **Woodchurch Library**

Positivitree, the organisation that submitted the original business plan have now withdrawn from the CAT process.

The Council has therefore had further discussions with the school and the school are bringing forward proposals to use this asset as a warm hub and then for pupils with special educational needs. This appears to be a very beneficial use for this building and therefore it is recommended that this asset is removed from CAT so that these other uses can be taken forward.

3.11 **Irby Library**

The Friends of Irby Library (FOIL) submitted a business plan for a range of community uses and a cafe in this building. While there are positive community benefits, the business plan was not viable.

Following further discussions with FOIL, they have submitted a revised business plan which is viable and therefore it is recommended that negotiations commence with them regarding a transfer of this asset based on the business plan at appendix 2 of this report.

As the former toilet block, adjacent to the library building, is secured and not causing any issues, it is recommended that this remains in place as it may be of some use in the future for community purposes if the transfer is successful. This will also save the CAT resources being used for demolition. The alternative option for this asset is a small residential/commercial development following demolition of the asset. The community benefit resulting from a transfer of this asset will bring greater community benefits.

3.12 Higher Bebington Library

The Co-op academy submitted a revised business plan (Appendix 2 of this report) which is now assessed as viable. They also confirmed, in writing, that the Co-op would meet, in full, the capital cost of the building and that they were only seeking revenue funding support. On this basis, it is recommended that negotiations commence for a transfer of this asset. The alternative use for this asset would be for a single residential development subject to planning permission and the agreement of Leverhulme Estates in relation to the covenant. The community benefits resulting from the transfer would outweigh the alternative use of this site.

3.13 Hoylake Library

The Life Tree submitted a revised business plan but, unfortunately, following assessment by officers, this is still unviable. The detail is set out at Appendix 3 of this report.

As no viable business plan has been produced it is recommended that the property should be marketed for commercial purposes given its location in the retail area of Market Street in Hoylake.

3.14 Wallasey Village Library

A revised business plan has been submitted and the details of this are contained in Appendix 2 of this report. This has been assessed by Officers as viable and it is recommended that negotiations commence for a transfer of this asset. The alternative use for this asset following its demolition would be a small residential development. The financial benefits of this would not outweigh the community benefits resulting from a transfer for the local community.

3.15 Brackenwood Golf Course

As Members may recall it was not possible to report on this asset to the December meeting of this committee, as further information and clarifications were required from Love Golf Manchester and Brackenwood Community Golf Limited (This is a new company that has been set up for the transfer of the golf course as advised in the latest clarification from R&M Estates/Brackenwood Golf Club. Details of this and the company structure are set out in Appendix 4 of this report), the organisations that had submitted business plans. This information has now been received and is set out in Appendix 4 of this report.

Officers, after considering the C.co report at Appendix 8 of this report, and informed by the additional information and clarifications received, have now assessed both business plans in line with the CAT policy. In addition, other factors which have been considered in making the officer recommendation are set out in the paragraphs below.

Members will be aware that following a review of the Council's municipal golf offer and as part of the 2022/23 budget process, Policy and Resources Committee on 22 March 2022 took a decision to close Brackenwood and Hoylake Municipal courses

from 1 April 2022 and to focus the Council's municipal golf offer on the two courses at Arrowe Park and The Warrens.

These decisions have resulted in the municipal golf offer, which has operated at a significant deficit for many years (£423,000 per annum between 2015-20), now operating at a profit projected to be £56,000 this financial year. The increased income targets have been exceeded and the surplus is currently supporting the Council's adverse variance in year and will continue to support budget savings in 2023/24 and beyond.

Most of the golf clubs previously operating from Hoylake have successfully re-located to Arrowe Park Golf course. The clubs formerly playing at Brackenwood have relocated out of Borough to the course at Hooton.

With the investment that has now been made at Arrowe Park and The Warrens, and with the capacity available at these courses, there are further opportunities to improve the performance and income generation at these sites which will support the Council's financial position.

It is also the case that Wirral has a significant number of golf courses in private ownership which are available to golfers in the Wirral.

Alongside these decisions, Members agreed to consider a Community Asset Transfer of Brackenwood Golf Course and Hoylake Municipal Golf Course following the 2022/23 budget setting process. (Hoylake Municipal will be the subject of a future report to this committee and therefore the comments below just relate to Brackenwood Golf Course).

For Brackenwood Golf Course, both business plans submitted, are seeking to re-open the course and they outline community benefits that could result from this. The business plans and additional details and clarifications on the business plans are in Appendix 4 of this report. Both organisations have been given the opportunity to provide any additional information on Biodiversity Net Gain associated with their proposals and any information received will be circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

From the business plans submitted by both organisations it is clear that re-opening Brackenwood Golf Course would bring a competitor back into the golf market which would have a direct impact on the Council's golf courses and also on private courses both in Wirral and Cheshire West and Chester. In terms of the impact on the Council courses there would be a direct adverse financial impact which would create significant risks to the decisions previously taken by the Council. In summary it is considered that Wirral is adequately endowed with golf courses that are available to the relevant communities and that the re-opening of Brackenwood Golf Course would not bring sufficient community benefits to offset the likely adverse financial impact on the Council's remaining municipal courses. The likely outcome would be that all three courses would run at a loss, the situation that the Council sought to avoid by closing two out of its four courses. That outcome would benefit nobody.

In March 2022, Full Council resolved to submit its Local Plan for examination. This follows a brownfield first strategy. To support the delivery of this option, the Council

must identify sites for Biodiversity Net Gain and playing pitch provision. Currently, there is a significant deficit of playing pitches for all sports, of all types, in all areas of the Borough as identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy and limited sites on which they can be provided. Without identified sites for pitches, the delivery of brownfield housing in the Borough would be put at significant risk. It should be noted that representations have been made to the Local Plan consultation stating that there is no evidence that the larger brownfield regeneration sites can meet the requirements to provide land for playing pitches and this matter will need to be addressed in the examination hearings taking place later this year.

In addition, in November 2022, the Council agreed its Asset Strategy for 2022 to 2027. As part of this work, the significance of Council sites to support the above objectives of the Council became clearer.

In December 2022, the Council received seven major planning appeals against its decisions to refuse residential development on various Green Belt sites.

Unfortunately, there are competing priorities and uses for limited Council owned land assets and therefore decisions must be made in relation to maximising the objectives of the Council. While a CAT of Brackenwood Golf Course would meet certain objectives of the Council, it is considered on balance, that the higher priority is supporting the delivery of the Local Plan and the brownfield first strategy to enable housing delivery and protection of the Green Belt. Therefore, it is recommended that Brackenwood Golf Course should be used to provide playing pitches and Biodiversity Net Gain in order to deliver Local Plan objectives. If Members support this approach funding is available from developer contributions and external organisations to deliver on this priority and a report could be brought back to the June committee for consideration.

3.16 Bromborough Civic Centre

This asset was put into consideration by Policy and Resources Committee at their meeting on 9 November 2022.

Expressions of interest were invited by 20 December 2022. Two were received. One from Neo and the other from Bromborough Local Community Group Limited and these are at Appendix 5 of this report. Officers have assessed these based on the CAT policy and the outcome is also included in Appendix 5. In overall terms, the Neo submission scored 74.6 out of 100 and the other 39.6 out of 100. There is a significant difference in the scores because (1) the Neo bid is very detailed, (2) it confirms the financial and staffing resources they have immediately available to support a transfer, (3) they have set out in detail the community benefits, (4) they are proposing to use the whole of the building and (5) they have indicated their commitment to including the Friends of Bromborough Library in the proposal.

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that a business plan is invited from Neo approval (a period of 8 weeks is allowed to develop the business plan in the approved CAT policy) and assessment by officers (approximately four weeks), it is reported to a future meeting of this Committee for consideration.

As part of that report, Officers will provide information on the commercial opportunities for the site as this will need to be considered by Members as part of the Council's duty and fiduciary responsibilities prior to any decisions being made about the future of the asset.

If Members of this committee are minded to recommend a transfer of this asset, at a future point, the final decision must be taken by Policy and Resources Committee as the value of the asset is above £500,000.

3.17 Former Public Toilets in Moreton

This asset was declared surplus by this Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2022.

Following the approval of the Asset Strategy by Policy and Resources Committee on 9 November 2022, this matter can now be considered for transfer under the Asset Transfer category.

Moreton in Bloom have submitted an expression of interest in this asset which is at Appendix 6 of this report. They want to use it for storage for their Christmas lights and environmental work in the area. They have the financial resources to take on this asset on a full, repairing and insuring lease for a term of 25 years. There are no alternative uses for this asset apart from demolition and landscaping the site.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following table sets out the capital value of each asset

ASSET	Estimated Asset Value	Estimated Capital Investment Costs
Hoylake Library	£250,000	£224,000
Irby Library	£400,000	£95,475
Pensby Library	£175,000	£141,000
Prenton Library	Not applicable - the Council do not own this asset	Not applicable - the Council do not own this asset
Wallasey Village Library	£400,000	£160,250
Woodchurch Library	Not applicable - school site	Not applicable - school site
Brackenwood Golf Course	£500,000-£1,000,000	Nil
Higher Bebington library	Nominal value as the restriction on use potentially	Not assessed

	negates any value.	
Woodchurch Leisure Centre	Nominal value	Up to £330,000
Moreton Toilets	£40,000	N/A
Bromborough Civic Centre	£600,000	Not yet assessed

4.2 This table provides information on the estimated value of each asset.

4.3 The estimated capital investment cost come from previous surveys which have been updated. Such investment is required over several years. It is given for information purposes.

Indicative Funding Table for the former libraries				
Area	Capital - Condition	Capital - Change of Use	Total Capital	Revenue
Higher Bebington	0	0	0	60,000
Hoylake	0	0	0	0
Irby	20,000	0	20,000	20,000
Pensby	67,000	0	67,000	44,583
Prenton	28,000	24,000	52,000	21,000
Wallasey Village	53,500	24,000	77,500	22,000
Woodchurch	0	0	0	0

Total

216,500 167,583

Available **500,000 282,000**

Difference **283,500 114,417**

4.4 Post any decision of this Committee, to transfer an asset, there will be a period of negotiation around the Transfer Agreement along with a period required for any capital works to be undertaken. During this period, for the libraries, there will be continued basic security and insurance costs as the libraries referred to in this report closed on 31 October 2022.

4.5 Costs will continue to be incurred by Asset Management from 1st November 2022 in relation to the libraries whilst the CAT process is finalised. At present there is uncertainty around how long this will be, and costs have been estimated at £0.062m up to the end of March 2023. However, there are risks associated with this figure and costs will continue into next financial year for some sites. Costs could also increase depending on utility bills and additional security requirements. The estimated sum post 1 April 2023 is £52,000. It is proposed that this is funded by using some of the surplus revenue resources currently allocated to the CAT process so that it does not put any unfunded pressures on the Council budget for 2023/24. This would leave £62,417 of revenue funding for the Bromborough library element of Bromborough Civic Centre should this be required if Members decide at a future point to transfer this asset.

4.6 If Brackenwood golf course is not transferred, there will be no additional cost for the Council as the course does not need to be maintained as it is closed. Alternative options will be considered, and these are likely to be funded by grant and/or developer contributions which will require no Council funding.

4.7 Any transfers will be on a full repairing and insuring lease ensuring there are no future costs for the Council. Leases will be monitored on an annual basis to ensure that repairs and maintenance are being undertaken. Evidence will be required that the asset is being insured.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The terms of reference for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee are to consider applications for transfers of assets to organisations that will provide community benefits e.g., main uses which would further the social well-being and interests of the local community. Examples would include cultural, recreational and sporting uses. Outside the definition would be use that was predominantly educational. Any appropriation of land from use as a library to educational use would require the approval of Policy and Resources Committee. The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee should refer to Policy and Resources Committee surplus assets for which the Committee saw no alternative community use.

5.2 In general the Committee in reaching a decision must consider all relevant considerations and disregard irrelevant considerations and come to a reasonable conclusion. That would include considering any potential uses for the assets which are alternative to those being proposed by the applicants for CAT transfers. Not to consider alternative uses would expose any decision to legal challenge.

- 5.3 A relevant consideration is the Council's fiduciary duty to the Council Taxpayer to take account of their interests in maximising income or savings and obtaining the best price reasonably obtainable for the disposal of any asset. The Committee should therefore take into account any income or capital receipt forgone as a result of donating an asset for community use. Any financial loss would have to be clearly outweighed by the strength of the community benefits. The Council's current financial position is a relevant factor.
- 5.4 If the community benefits are unlikely to be realised by a CAT transfer because, for example, of a lack of financial viability or necessary expertise, then they should be given little or no weight in the decision-making process, particularly if the CAT transfer would commit the Council to capital or revenue support which would be wasted if the community benefits were not realised.
- 5.5 The Council is under an additional duty to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable for the disposal of any interest in its land unless the disposal is for a lease for less than seven years. If the proposed lease is for a longer term, then a less than market rent would be lawful if the value of the community benefits outweighed any loss of income. If, however, the value of the land free of any restrictions imposed by the Council would be £2million or more, then the Secretary of State's consent would be required.
- 5.6 A further consideration is the Subsidy Control Act 2022 which prohibits subsidies by public bodies to an enterprise (even if not for profit) that offers goods or services on a market. If the financial assistance (e.g. charging a below market rent in a lease) conferred an economic advantage on the selected enterprise that might distort competition with other providers, it would be unlawful unless the advantage were below the "de minimis" level of £315,000 (measured over the length of the proposed lease) or the rigorous requirements for a lawful subsidy under the Act were satisfied.
- 5.7 Any proposed disposal by the Council of an interest in land that is public open space (i.e. land held for the purpose of public recreation such as public parks or golf courses that are open to the public and not restricted to a private membership) must be advertised in local newspapers for two successive weeks. Any objections received would have to be considered by the Committee before any decision were made on the disposal.
- 5.8 The grant of a lease to a CAT transferee would confer exclusive possession of the land to the organisation. The Council could impose covenants on the lessee e.g. to keep the property in good repair or not to use it for any purposes other than those specified. Those covenants would be enforceable but any decision by the Council to forfeit the lease for non-compliance could be overturned by the Court in its discretion if the lessee sought relief from forfeiture. The Council would in effect lose control of the land for the duration of the lease (and the lessee would have the right to a renewal of the lease on its expiry unless its right were excluded pursuant to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954).
- 5.9 Any disposal of the land for a different use than the one formerly established by the Council would have to be compliant with any legally enforceable covenants imposed

by previous owners or current landlords and with any requirements for planning permission.

- 5.10 If the Committee were to agree in principle to a CAT transfer, Asset Management would negotiate heads of terms with the transferee. Those terms would then be referred to the Tourism Committee for approval and to Policy and Resources Committee if the value of the land exceeded £500,000) whereupon the legal documentation and processes would be undertaken. Any capital works by the Council would have to be completed prior to the grant of the lease. Pending completion of the CAT transfer, any costs incurred in maintaining the asset would have to be met by the Council.
- 5.11 If the Committee decided not to proceed with a CAT transfer, the property would either be considered for an alternative use by the Council or put on the market for sale or rent in accordance with the Council's Asset Disposal Strategy.
- 5.12 If the Director of Resources considers that a viable business plan for educational use of the Higher Bebington library is submitted, then the report proposed that the matter would be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee with a recommendation that the site be appropriated by the Council for educational purposes but subject to the prior consent of the Leverhulme Estate in accordance with the covenant imposed on the land when it was purchased.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Council has existing resources in place to progress the recommendations set out in this report.
- 6.2 However, as new surplus assets are added to the CAT process and as it becomes "business as usual" activity, the Council will need to address specific resource requirements in terms of staffing, project management support and any financial resources that Members may wish to make available to support the transfer of any assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Transferring any asset carries a risk that it may not be successful. To reduce this risk, the Council has undertaken a very thorough process in terms of assessing each business plan, the funding required and considering all other relevant factors as detailed in this report.
- 7.2 In addition, under the CAT proposals the Council would be leasing the assets to the relevant organisation and if any transfer failed the asset would return to the Council but only after possible litigation and the Court or the lessee agreeing to the forfeiture of the Lease. Consideration could then be given to the options. Most of the assets have a prospect of an alternative use, so the Council could market the sites to realise a rent or capital receipt after any court process has been completed.
- 7.3 There are individual risks associated with the different CAT options, taking each in turn these are:

Library Transfer

- 7.4 Former library assets are continuing to incur holding costs to ensure the buildings remain in a safe satisfactory standard before transfer. Any delay in the transfer of libraries past the assumed date will incur additional holding costs that are not budgeted and put the council's 2023/24 financial position at risk. This would mean that alternative savings from elsewhere in the Council would need to be found next year, within an already difficult financial scenario.

Brackenwood Golf Course Transfer

- 7.5 As part of the 2022/23 budget process, a £382k saving was agreed by full Council on 28 February 2022 to review the Council's golf offer. This saving included the closure of Hoylake and Brackenwood Golf Courses and included an element of displacement income into Arrowse Park Golf Club from members of the closed clubs moving there to play.
- 7.6 The rationale for the two golf course closure included within the business case was stated as 'in terms of municipal golf provision, the two remaining golf courses should provide adequate facilities for the demand in the area based on current and historic footfall. Reducing the number of facilities will also allow the authority to focus resources and much needed investment in the remaining sites to ensure long term sustainability of a municipal golf offer'.
- 7.7 If either of the two courses currently closed were to re-open under an external organisation, there is a risk that there will be an over provision in the Borough. This may mean that additional income targets agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget process would no longer be met as the assumed displacement would no longer be available. The risk to the Council if this happens would be:
- Budget overspends resulting in other savings needed to be made elsewhere.
 - Focus on resources and much needed investment in the remaining sites may no longer be available and may not support the long-term sustainability of a municipal golf offer
 - The operation of the two remaining sites at Arrowse Park and the Warrens may no longer be viable, and they may have to close.
- 7.8 If the Council cannot identify sites to meet the requirements for playing pitches and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, then there is a significant risk that it will not be able to deliver its Local Plan Brownfield first strategy.
- 7.9 To mitigate these risks, this report recommends not transferring Brackenwood Golf Course and using this site for playing pitches and Biodiversity Net Gain. This would also ensure the sustainability of the remaining two municipal courses.

Other Risks

- 7.10 A communications strategy is in place to manage any reputational risks associated with the CAT project.

- 7.11 Any post transfer risks (e.g. ensuring compliance with the lease, maintaining the property etc) will be dealt with by lease provisions and regular annual monitoring of these matters.
- 7.12 A register of all assets transferred will be kept by the Asset Management Team. The annual report to members on the Asset Strategy 2022-27 will report progress on CAT.

Local Plan Risk

- 7.13 If the Council cannot identify sites to meet the requirements for playing pitches and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, then there is a significant risk that it will not be able to deliver its Local Plan Brownfield first strategy. To mitigate this risk, this report recommends not transferring Brackenwood Golf Course and using this site for playing pitches and Biodiversity Net Gain.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Engagement has taken place with each of the organisations as they prepared their business plans. Following the assessment process, further engagement took place with each group to provide feedback and to discuss the issues and options as set out in this report. Each organisation has been advised of the officer recommendation prior to the publication of this report. They have also been offered an opportunity to receive any further information from the lead officer should they require this after reading this report.
- 8.2 Following the decision of this Committee, the outcome will be discussed further with each organisation as appropriate.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 As part of the due diligence the Council has checked that each of the organisations recommended to receive a transfer of the asset has all the relevant policies in place or will have them in place prior to any Transfer Agreement being signed.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The assets referred to in this report are existing and vary in age and construction. In considering the business plans consideration was given to reduce carbon emissions and securing environmental improvements where this was possible, Discussions have taken place about the possibilities and benefits of carbon reduction from building retrofit and low carbon heating systems.

10.2 The Council has provided energy certificates and Energy performance Certificates as we are obliged to do when leasing a property. These detail potential interventions to reduce energy consumption.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Transferring the library assets has several community benefits. A number of new organisations will be formed to run the assets and this will provide new opportunities within those communities for community wealth building. The local focus of activity within those communities will complement existing facilities and create new economic opportunities for local groups.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Pensby Library agreed Heads of Terms (Exempt)
Appendix 1a Prenton Lease Agreements (Exempt)
Appendix 2 Higher Bebington Business Case (Exempt)
Appendix 2a Higher Bebington Cash Flow December 2022 (Exempt)
Appendix 2b Wallasey Village three year Cash Flow Forecast (Exempt)
Appendix 2c Irby FOIL – Cashflow Year 1 (Exempt)
Appendix 2d IRBY FOIL – Statutory Compliance Checks Table (Exempt)
Appendix 2e Irby FOIL Business Plan (Exempt)
Appendix 2f Irby FOIL Capex Request (Exempt)
Appendix 2g Irby FOIL Cashflow Year 1 Assumptions (Exempt)
Appendix 2h Irby FOIL Irby Motors Ltd (Exempt)
Appendix 2i Irby FOIL Library Floor Plan (Exempt)
Appendix 2j Irby FOIL Petition (Exempt)
Appendix 2k Irby FOIL Risk Analysis (Exempt)
Appendix 2l Irby FOIL Statutory Compliance Checks Table (Exempt)
Appendix 3 Life Tree CAT Stakeholder Analysis (Exempt)
Appendix 3a Life Tree CAT Community Need and Support (Exempt)
Appendix 3b Life Tree CAT Cash Flow (Exempt)
Appendix 3c Life Tree CAT SWOT Analysis (Exempt)
Appendix 3d Life Tree CAT Risk Log (Exempt)
Appendix 3e Life Tree CAT Capital Finance (Exempt)
Appendix 3f Life Tree CAT Cost Benefit Analysis (Exempt)
Appendix 3g Life Tree CAT – Hoylake Library Condition List (Exempt)
Appendix 3h Life Tree CAT Bank Account (Exempt)
Appendix 3i Life Tree CAT Business Plan (Exempt)
Appendix 4 Brackenwood – Love Golf MCR – CSR report (Exempt)
Appendix 4a Brackenwood – Love Golf MCR – Resubmission Narrative (Exempt)
Appendix 4b Community Golf – A vision for Community Benefit (Exempt)
Appendix 4c Community Golf – Cash flow 3 Year Amended (Exempt)
Appendix 4d Community Golf – Response to questions submission (Exempt)
Appendix 5 Bromborough CIVIC EOI Scoring and Summary (Exempt)
Appendix 5a CAT Expression of Interest – Bromborough Community Group (Exempt)

Appendix 5b CAT Expression of Interest – NEO (Exempt)
Appendix 5c NEO Community Plan (Exempt)
Appendix 6 Asset Transfer Expression of Interest - Moreton (Exempt)
Appendix 7 Wirral CAT Evaluation Report September 2022 (Exempt)

Appendices 1 to 7 of this report are exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Community Asset Transfer Policy 2022

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE in accordance with Section C of its Terms of Reference, “In considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;”.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Tourism Communities Culture and Tourism Committee Report on CAT (stage 1)	16 June 2022
Report on CAT	25 October 2022



TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 February 2023

REPORT TITLE:	NEW FERRY RANGERS COMMUNITY CLUBHOUSE
REPORT OF:	ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report outlines the various stages undertaken to secure funding for and subsequently award the tender for New Ferry Rangers Community Clubhouse project.

This project will support the delivery of the thematic priorities making up the Wirral Plan, namely:

- Inclusive Economy – This project creates community wealth and social value through the lease of a refurbished and desirable asset to a local Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It will also create jobs in an area that experiences challenges relating to employment
- Active and Healthy Lives – The newly refurbished facility will encourage active living (community gym and 3g facility), tackling health inequalities

It is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the award of the tender for refurbishment of the Bebington Youth Club and installation of a short sided 3G pitch to Skyline Property Solutions Ltd
2. Endorse the acceptance of the Sport England grant to help fund this project (comprising of £300,000 total capital and £36,875 revenue in development support)
3. Endorse the establishment of a long-term lease for the building, transferring responsibility to New Ferry Rangers Charitable Incorporated Organisation, said lease will include continuity of Youth Services provision from the site, minimum nine hours per week

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 This project is very important for the local community as it will provide quality facilities (a gym, 3G pitch and community café) in an area where they do not currently exist. It will bring back into use an under-used Council building and provide a range of benefits including increasing physical activity, improving health and well-being and promoting social inclusion. The project is already included within the Capital Programme.
- 1.2 The project has been competitively tendered. The tender process was managed by Wirral's Corporate Procurement Unit.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The other option considered was not to proceed with the project. This would leave the Council with an asset in poor condition, incurring ongoing maintenance costs, and not realising its full potential and benefits for the local community. Without this project:
- £336,875 of external grant funding from Sport England would have been lost
 - the Council will remain in control of an asset requiring significant maintenance cost, resulting in ongoing budget pressures

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This report relates to the refurbishment of Bebington Youth Club in New Ferry for community uses. It is situated within the electoral ward of Bromborough. The building is owned by the Council but is in a poor state of repair. The main driver for the project is to transfer the under-utilised asset to New Ferry Rangers Football Club (Charitable Incorporated Organisation), allowing them to deliver a fit for purpose, community offer from the site, including:
- Community Café
 - Community Gym
 - 3G Pitch
- 3.2 The Community Clubhouse should be seen as a complimentary element of the wider regeneration of New Ferry. The precinct related development will address the built environment issues, but this project is truly centred around community development.
- 3.3 The location sits within a Lower Super Output Area that is in the 3% most deprived in England. The Community Clubhouse will deliver a community owned facility that offers partners the opportunity to deliver on the very doorstep of this extremely deprived community. Multiple partners from health and social care to crime and disorder have already expressed an interest in utilising the new facility.

Table One: Capital Allocation

New Ferry Rangers Community Clubhouse Costs & Balance	
Source	Initial allocation
Council Capital	£650,000.00
Sport England Capital	£300,000.00
Approx Roof Contribution (based upon quote received from Assets, incl. 10% contingency.)	£66,000.00
Health & Safety Council wide fund (Virement ODN July 21)	£50,000.00
Further Capital agreed (Virement Nov 21)	£130,000.00
Total Initial Capital	£1,196,000.00

- 3.4 The associated Sport England capital grant (final uplifted amount of £300k) was formally offered in November 2022 (see appendix one). This report seeks approval to accept the final uplifted amount (now £336,875, including £36,875 revenue).
- 3.5 The allocation of capital grant funding and the subsequent intent to grant a long-term lease to New Ferry Rangers CIO were reported to Cabinet, 17 February 2020 'QUARTER 3 2019/20 CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING' (pg 22)
 "3.3.10 New Ferry Community Centre (£0.650m) The project is centred around the improvement of an existing Council owned asset in New Ferry. The asset needs modernisation and is currently only open for nine hours a week to a small, age restrictive section of the community. The refurbished centre will become a wider community asset. New Ferry Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) will be granted a long lease to operate it which will enable benefits from wider community involvement to be realised. The project fits the Council's wider aspiration for providing regeneration and support to the local community in New Ferry."
<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/g7942/Public%20reports%20pack%2017th-Feb-2020%2010.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10>
- 3.6 In July 2021 an ODN was taken by the Director of Regeneration of Place recommending a £50,000 virement from within the Council's approved Capital Programme to meet the budget shortfall for the New Ferry Rangers Community Clubhouse project.

- 3.7 A report written and scheduled for Policy and Resources Committee 1 December 2021, recommending a further virement of £130,000 from within the Economic, Regeneration and Development (ERD) Committee's Strategic Acquisitions Programme, on a one-off basis, to meet a budget shortfall in the New Ferry Community Club House project following the return of competitive tender for works. This was necessary as an increase in building costs had negatively affected the first tender process. This report was later deemed surplus to requirements because the uplift had already been detailed in the CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 2021/22 report, taken to Policy and Resources Committee by the Director of Resources, 10 November 2021.
- 3.8 The tender for the refurbishment of Bebington Youth Club was carried out in conjunction with Wirral's corporate procurement team. The associated contract was awarded in March 2022. The successful contractor was Skyline Property Solutions Ltd.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report refers to a project with funding previously highlighted within the Council's capital programme.
- 4.2 The project is supported by a grant from Sports England totalling £336,875.
- 4.3 The award of the associated long-term lease will reduce ongoing, rising maintenance costs for a building which is currently in poor repair and with low insulation performance.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The tender process was carried out in collaboration with the Council's corporate procurement team, following all relevant guidance.
- 5.2 The contract in question has been awarded and the contractor is on site. The contract was awarded in March 2022. The successful contractor was Skyline Property Solutions Ltd.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 This project is being managed from existing staff resources.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 If the project does not proceed then the Council will have an asset that is in poor repair, which will require future funding to repair and maintain it.
- 7.2 The Council will lose an opportunity to secure £300,000 of external capital grant funding and a community led project will not happen. This will impact on the wider regeneration priority for the Council in relation to New Ferry.

- 7.3 If the project does not proceed there will be a reputational risk to the Council in relation to the local community who support and are anticipating the delivery of this project.
- 7.4 Any further delays to the projects will see a further increase in delivery costs. Increased global demand in the construction sector, combined with the multiple and complex impacts of the pandemic and logistic issues, have resulted in unprecedented shortages, delays and ultimately, increased prices of materials and labour across the economy.
- 7.5 Within the UK, complications resulting from Brexit have exacerbated this situation, affecting all aspects of trade and labour availability. The repercussions are acutely impacting the UK construction sector.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Community Clubhouse Project has seen extensive local engagement throughout its development. It is safe to say that this redevelopment is extremely welcome locally.
- 8.2 The physical changes to the location have been through the planning process successfully.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This project will promote equality of opportunity being accessible to all members of the community to use the recreational and social facilities.
- 9.2 This decision does not require an Equality Impact Assessment.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 This project will ensure that land adjacent to the youth club, which is currently the scene of anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping is utilised constructively by the local community.
- 10.2 The newly refurbished building will be designed to reflect current building regulations regarding insulation.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Community Clubhouse project sits very comfortably alongside the Council's aspirations for community wealth building. The project clearly hits a number of the concept's core principles, not least 'Plural ownership of the economy' and 'Socially just use of land and property'.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One:

Sport England Award Letter

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Council's approved Capital Programme, approved by Council on 1 March 2021
- Invitation to tender documents, closed April 2022 (these are exempt/confidential)
- Community Consultation carried out in collaboration with New Ferry Rangers Charitable Incorporated Organisation

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE in accordance with Section C of its Terms of Reference, "In considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;".

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	17 Feb 2020
Council- Capital Programme 2021-2026	1 March 2021
CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 2021/22	Nov 2021

Appendix One: Sport England Award Letter



Mr Fergus Adams
Constituency Manager
Wirral Council
Pennant House
The Village
Bebington
CH63 7PL

URN: 2018009887 (your unique reference number should be quoted in all communications)

Dear Mr Adams,

Increase of Award Letter

I am delighted to inform you that, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the original award letter dated 8th March 2021, Sport England has agreed to increase the award by £50,000, resulting in a revised award of £300,000 capital, alongside the previously committed total £36,875 development support.

The reason for this increase is to contribute towards the cost of a replacement roof on the original building at a cost of £122,604.

The award now consists of funding as follows;

Total Confirmed Funding	Partnership Funding	Total Project Cost
£300,000 £36,875 revenue	£775,754	£1,112,629

You can only use this Award to finance your Project (Community Hub). We will not be able to further increase the amount of the award.

Acceptance

This offer remains subject to the terms and conditions previously stated in your original Award Offer Letter of 8th March 2021.

If you wish to accept the increased Award on these terms please return the enclosed Acceptance Form, signed and dated on behalf of Wirral Council by two authorised signatories to myaward@sportengland.org. The Acceptance together with this letter will form part of the existing "Agreement" between us. You must return it to us within ten days of the date of this letter.

After this ten day period this offer will lapse unless a valid and acceptable reason is given to us for the delay before the end of this period. If the offer lapses, your application will be considered withdrawn and we will write to you to confirm that this is the case.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact your Case Manager – Eve Heelas on 07825 926555 or at eve.heelas@sportengland.org.



Yours sincerely

Eve Heelas
Investment Management Team
Sport England



TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 February 2023

REPORT TITLE:	BUDGET SETTING 2023/24
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops which have been held in recent months. The workshops enabled officer and member liaison on proposed budget options, to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Budget Workshops also provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered.

The Policy and Service Committees are responsible for those services being delivered under their operational headings within their annual budget envelope. The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council.

This report also provides an update on the 2023/24 budget setting process with details on the most recent budget options, which were developed in response to the previously outlined budget gap.

Appendix 2 and 3 of this report contains exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is in the public interest to exclude the press and public during consideration of these items under Paragraph 3 'information relating to financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree that the Budget Workshop feedback and outcomes, as detailed in Appendices 2 & 3, be reported to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.
2. Note the latest budget information provided to Policy and Resources Committee in January.
3. Note and comment on the outcome of the public consultation for Leisure and Library Services as detailed in Appendices 4 & 5 to the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Council has a legal responsibility to set an annual balanced budget, which establishes how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. To successfully do so, engagement with members, staff and residents is undertaken; the recommendations in this report relate to this endeavour and act as a pre-cursor to budget proposals, scheduled to be considered by Full Council on 27 February 2023, following the schedule of activity shown in Appendix 4 and 5.
- 1.2 Failure to set a lawful budget in time may lead to a loss of revenue, significant additional administrative costs, as well as reputational damage. Failure to set a budget may lead to intervention from the Secretary of State under section 15 the Local Government Act 1999.
- 1.3 The scale of the financial challenge that the Council faces cannot be overstated. Setting a budget, especially in the context of largely uncontrollable, macro-economic pressures, emerging at an unprecedented pace, requires difficult decisions to ensure that a balanced position can be presented. Regular Member engagement on the process, which this report forms part of, is considered essential for effective budget formulation.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A report does not have to be provided to the Committee to outline activity at this stage, however it is considered appropriate to do so in order to ensure that the Committee has up-to-date information in respect of the financial context that the Council is operating within and set out the budget setting stages that are expected to follow, in order that the Committee can comment accordingly.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Policy & Resources Committee is responsible for co-ordinating processes for the development of the Budget and Policy Framework, together with decision-making on cross-cutting policies not part of the Policy Framework. The Policy and Service Committees are responsible for those services being delivered under their operational headings within their annual budget envelope. The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council.
- 3.2 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has met regularly to discuss the budget setting process, budget proposals, the budget gap that the Council faces and the associated uncertainty on funding. Member engagement in the process has taken place through Budget Workshops along with the presentation on Committee reports.

- 3.3 The Budget workshops were convened to enable officer and member liaison on proposed budget options, in order to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Budget Workshops also provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered.
- 3.4 The outcomes of these workshops are to be reported to meetings of those committees and will in turn be communicated to the Policy & Resources Committee as part of the decision-making process that facilitates a budget proposal to Full Council.
- 3.5 Appendix 2 to this report details the feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops in the Summer of 2022 to consider tranche one options. Appendix 3 to the report details the feedback and outcomes from the Budget Workshops held throughout October and November 2022 to consider options the address the further tranche 2 savings noted as required as a result of the national macroeconomic pressures the Council is facing.
- 3.5 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 October 2022, a potential budget gap of £49m for 2023/24 was presented. Members will be aware that the budget gap is an ever-moving target due to a number of factors; these include:
- Ongoing Government announcements of funding, including specifically the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2023/24.
 - A process of challenge and refinement within the Council to ensure that the proposals are evidence based.
 - Addition of new pressures that continue to materialise as further local and national evidence comes to light.
 - The continuing refinement of budget assumptions including inflation.
 - The development and refinement of budget options.
- 3.6 As a result of these factors, the budget forecast presented in October 2022 was updated and a more robust position is now available (the most recent budget update report presented to the Policy & Resources Committee can be found in Appendix 1). This position - which was an estimated budget gap in December of £38.4m - has been noted as £32.3m after application of the Provisional Finance Settlement information. This represents the Budget shortfall as of the date of the report and represents the target which needs to be offset with efficiencies, savings and cost reductions to deliver a balanced position.
- 3.7 The impact of all these changes will be considered, along with feedback from the consultation process and the budget proposals developed through the Service Committee and Policy & Resources Committee (P&R) Budget Workshop approach to present a robust position on financial matters to be considered in formulating a budget proposal to Full Council.
- 3.8 Policy & Resources Committee budget recommendations will be proposed in February 2023 in respect of the agreement of the annual Budget, setting of the council tax requirement and related matters to the Council, which will be debated by Full Council and voted upon by a simple majority.

3.9 Given the current size of the budget shortfall, the current level/breadth of services provided by the Council is not considered feasible and viable for continuance, hence the requirement to consider a number of potential budget options to ensure this gap can be closed.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on recent budget setting activity and describes the context in which the budget for 2023/24 is being set, where a prudent approach is being undertaken to develop budget proposals amidst an uncertain financial landscape.

4.2 The programme to develop a robust budget position, of which this report is a part, will support the Council in demonstrating compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management (FM) Code, specifically in relation to Section 4 of the FM Code which refers to the Annual Budget.

4.3 The FM Code requires the Council to demonstrate that the processes used satisfy the principles of good financial management, based on the following six principles:

- Organisational Leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisation culture.
- Accountability – based on Medium-Term Financial Planning, which derives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
- Financial management - undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently with evidence of periodic officer actions and elected member decision making.
- Professional standards - Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team and is evidenced.
- Assurance - sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool and are mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of external audit, Internal Audit and inspection.
- Sustainability: issues around sustainability of local services are at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public Resources.

4.4 Delivering financial sustainability is vitally important for the Council and the budget options presented have been drawn up with this in mind; consideration is given to areas of discretionary expenditure that could be curtailed along with demonstrating savings that can be delivered from statutory components of the Council.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, has been charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget to recommend to the Council.

- 5.2 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council. Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.
- 5.3 Section 30(6) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council has to set its budget before 11th March in the financial year preceding the one in respect of which the budget is set.
- 5.4 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 5.5 When considering options, Members must bear in mind their fiduciary duty to the council taxpayers of Wirral. Members must have adequate evidence on which to base their decisions on the level of quality at which services should be provided.
- 5.6 Where a service is provided pursuant to a statutory duty, it would be unlawful to fail to discharge it properly or abandon it, and where there is discretion as to how it is to be discharged, that discretion should be exercised reasonably.
- 5.7 The report sets out the relevant considerations for Members to consider during their deliberations and Members are reminded of the need to ignore irrelevant considerations. Members must not come to a decision which no reasonable authority could come to; balancing the nature, quality and level of services which they consider should be provided, against the costs of providing such services.
- 5.8 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to its decision.
- 5.9 The public sector equality duty is that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to: (1) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010; (2) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and (3) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.10 Any decision made in the exercise of any function is potentially open to challenge if the duty has been disregarded. The duty applies both to Full Council when setting the budget and to the Policy and Services Committees when considering decisions.
- 5.11 Once a budget is in place, Council has delegated responsibility to the Policy and Services Committees to implement it. The Committees may not act contrary to the

Budget without consent of Council other than in accordance with the Procedure Rules set out at Part 4(3) of the Constitution.

- 5.12 It is essential, as a matter of prudence that the financial position continues to be closely monitored. In particular, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that agreed savings are delivered and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, any proposals put forward must identify the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce those savings.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The implications for staffing, ICT and Assets are complicit with individual savings proposals. Until decisions are taken in forming the final set of proposals to balance the 2023/24 Budget the overall impact is not able to be defined precisely.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Council's ability to maintain a balanced budget is dependent on a proactive approach due to estimated figures being provided in the calculation for the budget, albeit the best estimates available at the time, plus any amount of internal and external factors that could impact on the budget position. Examples of which are the significant emerging inflationary and cost of living pressures, new legislation, increased demand, loss of income, increased funding, decreased funding, inability to recruit to posts, ongoing impact of the pandemic etc
- 7.2 A robust monitoring and management process for the budget is in place. If at any time during the year an adverse position is forecast, remedial action must be agreed and implemented immediately to ensure the budget can be brought back to balanced position.
- 7.3 The risk of this not being able to be achieved could mean that the Council does not have enough funding to offset its expenditure commitments for the year and therefore not be able report a balanced budget at the end of the year. This could result in the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice.
- 7.4 A key risk to the Council's financial plans is that funding and demand assumptions in particular can change as more information becomes available. As such, the MTFP is regularly reviewed and updated as part of routine financial management.
- 7.5 A balanced MTFP is fundamental in demonstrating robust and secure financial management. Delivering a balanced position requires continual review and revision of plans to allow alternative financial proposals to be developed and embedded in plans as situations change. A delay in agreeing these may put the timetable for setting the 2023/24 budget at risk and may result in a balanced budget not being identified in time for the deadline of 11 March 2023.
- 7.7 Assumptions have been made in the current budget outlook for income and funding from business rates and council tax and social care grants as the main sources of

funding. If there is an adverse change to these assumptions as a result of the CSR, additional savings proposals or reduced expenditure would need to be identified as soon as possible to ensure a balanced five-year MTFP can be achieved. Committees will be kept updated with any announcements regarding the CSR through the year.

- 7.8 Sections 25 to 29 of the Local Government Act 2003 impose duties on the Council in relation to how it sets and monitors its budget. These provisions require the Council to make prudent allowance for the risk and uncertainties in its budget and regularly monitor its finances during the year. The legislation leaves discretion to the Council about the allowances to be made and action to be taken.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation has been carried out with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in arriving at the governance process for the 2023/24 budget setting process. SLT have overseen the production of the budget scenarios laid out in this report.
- 8.2 Engagement with local residents and businesses has been undertaken as part of the budget setting process. The outcome of this consultation for Leisure and Library Services is included at Appendices 4 and 5 and will be presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 15 February 2023, alongside the outcomes of the other service-specific consultations.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 At this time, there are no further equality implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be equality implications associated with these, and these will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 At this time, there are no additional environmental and climate implications as these have already been identified for the proposals agreed and submitted. However, where the budget is unbalanced and further proposals are required, then there may be environment and climate implications associated with these that will be addressed within the relevant business cases presented to the Committee.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report has no direct community wealth implications however the budget proposals under consideration should take account of related matters across headings such as the following:

- **Progressive Procurement and Social Value**
How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
- **More local & community ownership of the economy**
Supporting more cooperatives and community businesses.
Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses.
Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during the pandemic to further develop this sector.
- **Decent and Fair Employment**
Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.
- **Making wealth work for local places**

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APPENDICES

- APPENDIX 1 - POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUDGET REPORT JAN 23
- APPENDIX 2 – TRANCHE 1 BUDGET WORKSHOP FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES
- APPENDIX 3 – TRANCHE 2 BUDGET WORKSHOP FEEDBACK AND OUTCOMES
- APPENDIX 4 – OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN LEISURE SERVICES
- APPENDIX 5 - OUTCOME OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN LIBRARY SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CIPFA’s Financial Management Code
The Annual Audit Letter for Wirral Council 2019-20

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	18 January 2023
Policy and Resources Committee	9 November 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	5 October 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	13 July 2022

Policy and Resources Committee	16 March 2022
Full Council	28 February 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	15 February 2022

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 18 January 2023**

REPORT TITLE:	2023/24 BUDGET UPDATE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (\$151 OFFICER)

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the 2023/24 budget position following the forecast position presented at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 5 October 2022 and at the subsequent Policy & Resources Committee Budget Workshop on 24 November 2022. Budget options are set out in this report, which have been developed in response to the previously outlined budget gap.

The Policy and Resources Committee, in consultation with the respective Policy and Service Committees, is charged by Council to formulate a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Budget to recommend to the Council. The Policy and Service Committees are responsible for those services being delivered under their operational headings within their annual budget envelope.

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 19 December 2022 and the information provided in this report outlines the government's announcements on that day and afterwards. The Provisional Finance Settlement becomes final at a date set by Government in late January or early February 2023.

The Settlement provided a level of additional resources to the Council and in addition the prospect of increasing Council Tax and the Adult Social care Precept by 4.99% for 2023/24; this is significantly below the headline rate of inflation in the UK economy at the present time (CPI c.10% at the date of this report). However, the additional resources which amount to £6.3m are insufficient to bridge the Council's Budget shortfall which has been confirmed in the sum of £49m (gross) and £32.3m (net) following the completion of internal review and the impact of the Provisional Settlement but excluding the higher level of Council Tax increase that is now possible; that is 4.99% rather than 2.99% as envisaged in the MTFP approved by Council in February 2022.

Final budget proposals will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee on 15 February 2023 for recommendation to full Council. This report supports the delivery of the Wirral Plan as part of the process of delivering a balanced budget for all Council activity, and therefore all Wirral Plan aims and objectives, for 2023/24. This report is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Policy and Resources Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2023/24, in advance of the Final Settlement which is expected in late January/early February 2023.

2. Recognise the extent of the Council's financial challenge and the need to make significant financial savings in order to maintain the Council as a going concern, to avoid the issuance of a Section 114 notice and the potential ministerial intervention under Section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 which would be likely to ensue.
3. Note the savings, efficiencies and income proposals that are available to address the 2023/24 budget gap.
4. Note the latest position on consultation and agree to consult on the Budget proposals for 2023/24, under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
5. Note that the Section 151 Officer may need to make further adjustments to the forecast budget shortfall pending final decisions by Members in the period ahead.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 The Council has a legal responsibility to set a balanced budget, which sets out how financial resources are to be allocated and utilised. To do this effectively requires engagement with staff, elected members and residents along with other stakeholders. Previous reports to the Committee have highlighted the external challenges that are impacting on the 2023/24 budget setting process and have highlighted the extent of the financial challenge faced. This report presents the culmination of the work undertaken to present options for budget formulation and to ensure the necessary preparations to facilitate a budget recommendation to Council on 27 February 2023.
- 1.2 The scale of the financial challenge that the Council faces cannot be overstated. Setting a budget, especially in the context of largely uncontrollable, macro-economic pressures, requires challenging decisions to ensure that a balanced position can be presented. Members have been engaged in the process through the work of the Policy and Service Committees and the Policy and Resource Budget and Development Group composed of Group Leaders.
- 1.3 Failure to set a balanced budget may lead to intervention from the Secretary of State under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999. Failure to set a lawful budget by the required deadline will lead to a loss of revenue that is likely to be irrecoverable and incur significant additional costs and reputational damage. Providing this update following the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, is a way of taking suitable steps to enable the Council to set a lawful budget and to protect the Council, Customers and Members from the consequences of failing to take the necessary decisions.
- 1.4 Council approved the then latest Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at its meeting on 28 February 2022; this confirmed key principles the Council would consider in respect of its financial planning. The MTFS provides a robust, consistent, and sustainable approach to establishing and maintaining a stable and prudent financial basis on which the Council's services are to be delivered.
- 1.5 In order to fulfil the aims of the MTFS, it is imperative that proposals for budget options are evidence based and achievable. In order to ensure that this is the case, rigorous review has been undertaken through:
- Directorate Management Teams (DMT)
 - Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
 - Internal Challenge Panels
 - Council Committees.
- 1.6 This process of review and challenge is ongoing, to ensure that final proposals made to Policy & Resources Committee in February, for recommendation to Full Council, are fully scrutinised and fit and proper in terms of readiness for decision-making. Contained within this report are all current options for consideration prior to the need to make final decisions on how the budget for 2023/24 should be balanced.
- 1.7 The information contained in this report also provides the opportunity for the Policy and Services Committees at their meetings in January 2023 to provide feedback on the budget proposals for the Policy and Resources Committee to take into consideration in recommending a lawful budget to Full Council at its meeting of 27 February 2023.

1.8 As part of the budget setting process, the Policy and Resources Committee is able to take into consideration the outcome of the budget setting consultation process with residents, businesses, and all those with a stake in the future of Wirral.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 The setting of a legal budget is a statutory requirement and therefore no other options have been considered.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 October 2022, a potential budget gap of £49m for 2023/24 was presented. Members will be aware that the budget gap is an ever-moving target due to a number of factors; these include:

- Ongoing Government announcements of funding, including specifically the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement for 2023/24
- A process of challenge and refinement within the Council to ensure that the proposals are evidence based. Addition of new pressures that continue to materialise as further local and national evidence comes to light.
- The continuing refinement of budget assumptions including inflation.
- The development and refinement of budget options.

3.2 As a result of these factors, the budget forecast presented in October 2022 has been updated and a more robust position is now available. This position - which was estimated before Christmas at £38.4m - has been confirmed as £32.3m after application of the Provisional Finance Settlement. This represents the Budget shortfall as of the date of this report and represents the target which needs to be offset with efficiencies, savings and cost reductions in moving towards a balanced position.

2023/24 Budget Position

- The 2023/24 budget position is currently as follows:

	23-24 Budget Position Reported in 5 Oct 22 (£m)	23-24 Revised Budget Position (£m)
TOTAL FUNDING	-339.30	-363.19
BUDGET REQUIREMENT		
Baseline	330.58	330.58
Removal of one-off items from 21/22:	-2.81	-2.81
Baseline Restated	327.77	327.77
ADD KNOWN PRESSURES/ GROWTH	60.54	67.72
INITIAL BUDGET GAP	49.00	32.30
DEDUCT PROPOSED NET SAVINGS	0	-39.50
REVISED BUDGET GAP / (SURPLUS)	49.00	-7.20

A more detailed analysis of this table can be found in Appendix 1.

- 3.3 In November 2022, the Chancellor of the Exchequer make fiscal announcements in his Autumn Statement. The details of this and further information has been supplied in the Provisional Finance Settlement and the main points are summarised in Appendix 2.
- 3.4 At the Policy and Resources Committee on 5 October, it was noted that officers would work up a further package of savings proposals to meet the forecast budget shortfall at that time with Members engaged via the Group Leaders' Budget Development Working Group established by Policy and Resources Committee. Accordingly, a set of budget proposals for 2023/24 are included in Appendix 3.

Capital Programme

- 3.5 In view of the very large revenue savings needed to balance the 2023/24 revenue budget the Budget proposals do not envisage additional Capital Programming for financial year 2023/24 unless one of the following conditions are met:
- The item is to be funded from Government grants, Section 106 contributions or other contributions and funding external to the Council
 - The item is funded from capital receipts

3. The item forms part of a business case that demonstrates clearly that revenue savings will flow from the capital investment and that these savings will exceed the commitment to fund this from borrowing or revenue resources.

3.6 The underlying assumptions used to form the forecast budget shortfall have already taken into account the savings arising from ongoing slippage in the Capital Programme. In addition the review has also identified opportunities to reach for further savings from existing programming.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report is part of a programme of activity to ensure that a fully balanced, legal budget can be recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council at its meeting of 27 February 2023.

4.2 The programme to develop a robust budget position, of which this report is a part, will support the Council in demonstrating compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code, specifically in relation to Section 4 of the FM Code which refers to the Annual Budget.

4.3 The FM Code requires the Council to demonstrate that the processes used satisfy the principles of good financial management, based on the following six principles:

- Organisational Leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisation culture.
- Accountability – based on Medium-Term Financial Planning, which derives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
- Financial management - undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported frequently with evidence of periodic officer actions and elected member decision making.
- Professional standards - Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team and is evidenced.
- Assurance - sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool and are mainstreamed into financial management, including political scrutiny and the results of external audit, Internal Audit and inspection.
- Sustainability: issues around sustainability of local services are at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public Resources.

4.4 Delivering financial sustainability is vitally important for the Council and the budget options presented have been drawn up with this in mind, consideration is given to areas of discretionary expenditure that could be curtailed along with demonstrating savings that can be delivered from statutory components of the Council.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Council must set the budget in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and approval of a balanced budget each year is a statutory responsibility of the Council and, therefore, of this Committee in preparing that budget.

- 5.2 The provisions of section 25, Local Government Act 2003 require that, when the Council is making the calculation of its budget requirement in February, it must have regard to the report of the chief finance (s.151) officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. In doing so, Members must satisfy themselves that sufficient mechanisms are in place to ensure both that savings are delivered, and that new expenditure is contained within the available resources. Accordingly, proposals put forward as part of the budget process will have identified the realistic measures and mechanisms to produce the desired outcomes.
- 5.3 Once the Committee has agreed draft budget proposals, there is then a requirement under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to conduct specific consultation with persons or bodies appearing to it to be representative of non-domestic ratepayers about the authority's proposals for expenditure (including capital expenditure) in the forthcoming financial year. The information required to be shared as part of the consultation is set out in the Non Domestic Ratepayers (Consultation) Regulations 1992. This includes the authority's current estimates of the total of its revenue expenditure and the total of its expenditure for capital purposes for the forthcoming financial year (the draft budget proposals). It must be borne in mind that this is consultation on the budget proposals, not on the decision to take whatever decision is implied by the adoption of that budget.
- 5.4 The report sets out the relevant considerations for Members to consider during their deliberations and Members are reminded of the need to ignore irrelevant considerations. Members have a duty to seek to ensure that the Council acts lawfully and, where a service is provided pursuant to a statutory duty, it would not be lawful to fail to discharge it properly or abandon it, and where there is discretion as to how it is to be discharged, that discretion should be exercised reasonably. Members must not come to a decision which no reasonable authority could come to; balancing the nature, quality and level of services which they consider should be provided, against the costs of providing such services.
- 5.5 There is a particular requirement to take into consideration the Council's fiduciary duty and the public sector equality duty in coming to a decision.
- 5.6 Members are also individually reminded that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applies to the Council meeting on the budget and therefore arguably to the formulation of the Budget. Members who are two months or more in arrears with their Council Tax must declare this to the meeting and must not vote on budget recommendations, as to do otherwise can be a criminal offence.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The implications for staffing, ICT and Assets are complicit with individual savings proposals. Until decisions are taken in forming the final set of proposals to balance the 2023/24 Budget the overall impact is not able to be defined precisely.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The Budget process designed for 2023/24 mitigates the risks of a Budget not being set lawfully. This is underpinned by a robust monitoring and review process both in 2022/23 and for 2023/24.
- 7.2 Failure to achieve a balanced budget would lead to the Section 151 Officer issuing a Section 114 notice and potential ministerial invention under Section 15 of the Local Government Act

1999.

- 7.3 Funding and demand assumptions can change as more information becomes available. As such, the Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) is regularly reviewed and updated as part of routine financial management.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Initial consultation has taken place in respect of the priorities and views of the public in formulating the draft budget, as set out in this report. An update on the approach, methodology and current findings as of this date (given the consultation remains live) can be found in Appendix 4.
- 8.2 Statutory budget consultation will commence subject to agreement by the Committee. This will take place in January 2023 and feedback will be taken into consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee when recommending a budget to Full Council at its meeting of 15 February 2023.
- 8.3 The Council has engaged regularly with trade unions about the Council's financial position. This will continue throughout the budget setting process.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The equality implications will be included within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The environment and climate implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed and will be addressed when these are brought forward for approval.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The community wealth implications will be considered within the individual savings proposals currently being developed. The budget proposals under consideration will take account of related matters across headings such as:
- a. Progressive Procurement and Social Value - How we commission and procure goods and services. Encouraging contractors to deliver more benefits for the local area, such as good jobs, apprenticeship, training & skills opportunities, real living wage, minimising their environmental impact, and greater wellbeing.
 - b. More local & community ownership of the economy – Supporting cooperatives and community businesses. Enabling greater opportunities for local businesses. Building on the experience of partnership working with voluntary, community and faith groups during recent years to further develop this sector.
 - c. Decent and Fair Employment Paying all employees a fair and reasonable wage.
 - d. Making wealth work for local places

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Forecast Budget Position 2023/24.

Appendix 2: Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24.

Appendix 3: Budget Setting Options 2023/24.

Appendix 4: Budget Consultation Update 2023/24.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

CIPFA's Financial Management Code

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	09 November 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	05 October 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	13 July 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	16 March 2022
Full Council	28 February 2022
Policy and Resources Committee	15 February 2022

Appendix 1 - Forecast Budget Position 2023/24.

	23-24 Budget Position Reported in 5 Oct 22 (£m)	23-24 Revised Budget Position (£m)	Change (£m)	Note
FUNDING				
Council Tax	-168.43	-168.63	-0.20	
Business Rates	-138.07	-152.96	-14.89	
Other	-32.80	-41.59	-8.80	
TOTAL FUNDING	-339.30	-363.19	-23.89	a
BUDGET REQUIREMENT				
Baseline	330.58	330.58	0.00	
Removal of one-off items from 21/22:	-2.81	-2.81	0.00	
Baseline Restated	327.77	327.77	0.00	
ADD KNOWN PRESSURES/ GROWTH	60.54	67.72	7.18	
BUDGET GAP	49.00	32.30	-16.70	
DEDUCT PROPOSED SAVINGS				
Increasing Business Efficiencies	0	-17.91	-17.91	
Increasing Income	0	-5.36	-5.36	
Changing how we fund or provide services	0	-8.97	-8.97	
Reducing or stopping services	0	-7.26	-7.26	
Total Savings Income and efficiencies:	0	-39.50	-39.50	b
REVISED BUDGET GAP / (SURPLUS)	49.00	-7.20	-56.20	

Notes

a: Funding Changes

	£m	£m
Estimated funding assumptions 1 Oct 22		-339.30
Revised estimated funding assumptions Nov 22	-8.97	
Impact of Council Tax base increase	-0.20	
Additional funding - Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement	-14.72	
		-23.89
Revised estimated funding assumptions Dec 22		-363.19

Impact of Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

Adjustment to funding	-14.72	
Related new pressures	8.44	
Net Impact of provisional Local Government Finance Settlement		<u>-6.28</u>

b: Proposed Savings

Proposed savings by Tranche	23-24 Budget Position Reported in 5 Oct 22 (£m)	23-24 Revised Budget Position (£m)
Tranche 1	0	-12.02
Tranche 2	0	-13.49
Tranche 3	0	-14.00
Total Savings Income and efficiencies:	0	-39.50

Proposed saving by Committee	23-24 Budget Position Reported in 5 Oct 22 (£m)	23-24 Revised Budget Position (£m)
Adult Social Care and Public Health	0	-5.94
Children, Young People & Education	0	-5.47
Economy Regeneration & Housing	0	-2.66
Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport	0	-1.69
Policy & Resources	0	-17.37
Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure	0	-6.38
Total Savings Income and efficiencies:	0	-39.50

Appendix 2

Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This briefing note outlines the government's announcement and subsequent publications on 19th December 2022 concerning the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 and gives an analysis on the impact on Wirral Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), although as noted below all data is provisional at this stage.
- 1.2 The Local Government Finance Settlement gives a net betterment position of £6.28m compared to previous assumptions in the Medium-Term Financial Position (MTFP).
- 1.3 The £6.28m includes £12.30m more than previously assumed in Adult Social Care related ringfenced grants. However, this will bring additional cost pressures of £8.44m.
- 1.4 Despite additional funding in the settlement, additional savings will still be required in order to achieve a balanced budget position for 2023/24.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 17th November 2022 the government announced The Autumn Statement, alongside the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR's) new set of Economic and Fiscal Outlook forecasts. The Autumn Statement responded to the OBR forecasts and set out the medium-term path for public finances and the Government's spending plans for each government department for the next two financial years, including local government.

Following this, on 19th December 2022 the Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 was announced, with impacts on Core Spending Power for 2023/24, Social Care Grant allocations as well as other grant details. The settlement was for a single year only based on Spending Review 2021 funding levels updated for the Autumn Statement 2022 announcements.

At the same time, a consultation related to the settlement proposals was launched, which runs for 4 weeks and concludes on 16th January 2023.

3.0 LOCAL GOVERNMENT HEADLINES

3.1 Core Spending Power

Core Spending Power is a measure of the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery. It sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities (assuming the maximum permitted Council Tax increase is implemented) through the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The headline announcement was that an additional £5 billion of funding would be "made available" to councils, representing a 9.2% cash terms increase, with a minimum increase being guaranteed at 3%.

Despite a 9.2% cash terms increase, the increase in funding does not meet inflation pressures faced by Councils, and therefore represents a real term drop in core spending power.

The main sources of the funding are summarised in the following table:

ENGLAND Funding Source	2022-23*	Provisional 2023-24	Change 23-24	Change 23-24
	£ million	£ million	£ million	%
Settlement Funding Assessment	14,882.2	15,671.1	788.9	5.3%
Compensation for the business rates multiplier	1,275.1	2,204.6	929.5	72.9%
Council Tax Requirement	31,922.5	33,838.4	1,915.9	6.0%
Improved Better Care Fund	2,139.8	2,139.8	0	0
New Homes Bonus	556.0	290.6	-265.4	-47.7%
Rural Services Delivery Grant	85.0	85.0	0	0
Social Care Grant	2,346.4	3,852.0	1,505.6	64.2%
Services Grant	822.0	464.2	-357.8	-45.5%
Market sustainability and FCC (and improvement)	162.0	562.0	400	246.9%
ASC Discharge Funding	0	300.0	300	100%
Lower Tier Services Grant	111.0	0	-111	-100%
Rolled in grants	238.6	0	-238.6	-100%
Minimum Funding Guarantee	0	136.0	136	100%
Core Spending Power	54,540.5	59,543.8	5,003.2	9.2%

3.2 Council Tax

The Council Tax proposals set out in the Autumn Statement in November were confirmed as part of the settlement. The proposal for core Council Tax in 2023/24 is a referendum cap of up to 3% (previously 2%).

There is also the flexibility to add up to a further 2% adult social care precept for authorities providing adult social care services.

3.3 Improved Better Care Fund

Improved Better Care fund is unchanged in cash terms for all upper tier councils, with distribution also unchanged.

3.4 Social Care Grant

Social Care Grant will increase by £2,044.6m in 2023/24, with the additional amounts allocated as follows:

- £1,505.6m of additional grant funding.
- However, £161m of that is the rolling in of the Independent Living Fund.
- £400m for additional Improvement funding added to Market Sustainability grant.
- £300m for ringfenced Adult Social Care Discharge funding.

Allocations are related to the Adult Social Care needs formula with recognition of Social Care Council Tax precept and to previous market sustainability funding allocations. More detail will follow on additional reporting requirements, and the better care fund and discharge funding must be pooled with local health boards.

- 3.5 Lower Tier Services Grant**
Introduced in 2021/22, the Lower Tier Services Grant will cease and therefore not be distributed to Local Authorities in 2023/24. The funding for this grant will instead be used to support the guaranteed 3% increase in Core Spending Power.
- 3.6 New Homes Bonus**
The government has decided to maintain the current approach to the NHB payments in 2022/23. There will be no legacy (i.e., second) payment of New Homes Bonus, with the value previously representing legacy payments instead being used to support the 3% CSP increase referred to in paragraph 3.1.
- This results in a £265m (48%) reduction in the overall grant for 2023/24.
- 3.7 Services Grant**
The overall value of this grant, first introduced in 2022/23, has reduced from £822m to £464m partly due to the removal of the National Insurance Levy which this grant previously included support for. The reduced amount will instead be used to enhance the Supporting Families Grant and to partially fund a contingency provision.
- 3.8 Public Health Grant**
Information on the Public Health grant is not yet available and is expected in the new year.
- 3.9 Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund**
This new grant totalling £562m includes £162m from the former Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care Fund, with the additional £400m intended to support Local Authorities in making tangible improvements to adult social care and in particular to address discharge delays, social care waiting times, low fee rates, workforce pressures, and to promote technological innovation in the sector.
- 3.10 ASC Discharge Fund**
This is a new £300m grant for 2023/24 and is intended to form part of Better Care Fund plans. It is aimed at reducing delayed transfers of care and has been allocated based on the improved Better Care Fund shares in used in 2023/24.
- 3.11 Minimum Funding Guarantee**
A new funding stream will be distributed in 2023/24 to replace Lower Tier Services grant and is intended to provide a funding floor for all local authorities, so that no local authority would see an increase in Core Spending Power that is lower than 3% before Council Tax decisions. The total funding for this grant is £136m.
- 3.12 Funding Reform**
Government has confirmed that reforms to local government funding through the Relative Review of Needs and Resources, as well as the reset of accumulated business rates growth have both been paused for the remainder of this Spending Review period, but they are “committed to improving the local government finance landscape in the next Parliament”.

4.0 WIRRAL COUNCIL IMPACT

4.1 Council Tax

Previous assumptions have been that a 2% Core increase and a 1% Social Care Precept would be applied. The confirmation of the 3% core referendum principal means a potential increase in Council Tax income of approximately £1.65m.

Similarly, an additional 1% Council Tax precept for Adult Social Care would generate an additional £1.65m. Both these figures are subject to confirmation of the Council Tax Base figure for 2023/24, which is due to be reported to Policy and Resources in January 2023.

Should these increases not be fully implemented, alternative savings of £3.3m will need to be found.

4.2 Social Care Grant

Provisional allocations of the ringfenced Social Care Grant indicate that Wirral will receive £32.14m in 2023/24, which is an increase of £5.38m (including the Independent Living Fund) compared with previous 2023/24 assumptions included in the £38.4m budget gap.

However, as the Independent Living Fund has been rolled into the Social Care Grant there is a corresponding £1.52m pressure due to the removal of the grant from the revenue budget.

The net impact is therefore a £3.86m improvement on the MTFP.

4.3 Lower Tier Services Grant

With confirmation being received that this grant will cease after 2022/23, this constitutes a £0.52m reduction in funding for Wirral from 2022/23 budget and previous 2023/24 assumptions.

4.4 New Homes Bonus

It had previously been unsure if New Homes Bonus would continue after 2022/23, or if it would be distributed with the same methodology, and a reduction from the 2022/23 budget had therefore been assumed.

However, confirmation that the current New Homes Bonus approach would continue, and provisional allocations indicate Wirral will received £0.44m in 2023/24, an increase of £0.14m against previous assumptions.

4.5 Services Grant

Previous forecasts had assumed a reduction of Services grant due to the removal of the National Insurance Levy. However, provisional allocations indicate Wirral will receive £3.16m for this grant, which is £0.75m less than anticipated.

4.6 Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund

Provisional allocations allocate £4.22m of this fund to Wirral for 2023/24, which wasn't included in previous assumptions. However, although detailed conditions for this grant are not expected until early in 2023, at this stage it is assumed that this grant will be ringfenced and met with subsequent cost pressures and is therefore not an improvement to the overall budget position.

4.7 **ASC Discharge Grant**

This new grant will form part of Better Care Fund plans and Wirral has been allocated £2.7m for 2023/24. This will be met by corresponding cost pressures and therefore does not impact the budget position.

4.8 **Business Rates 100% Retention Pilot**

The settlement confirmed that the 100% Business Rates Retention pilot that Wirral participates in alongside Liverpool City Region authorities will continue in 2023/24 and will therefore continue to benefit from the resulting increased level of Business Rates receipts for another year. This was already budgeted for in the MTFP. This is positive news as Wirral benefits by approximately £7m per year as a result of participating in the pilot.

Government will review the role of such arrangements as a source of income for areas and its impact on local economic growth, and as part of deeper devolution commitments as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper.

4.9 **Business Rates Top-up**

The latest assumptions were that the Business Rates Top-up would increase by 5% to £55.69m. Settlement confirms Wirral's 2023/24 allocation as £59.24m which is a 9.1% increase from 2022/23. This is an improvement of £3.55m and constitutes the following:

- 10.1% increase based on September 2022 CPI.
- An adjustment for the impact on Business Rates of the Revaluation 2023.

4.10 MTFP Assumptions Comparison

In total, the provisional impact of the Local Government Finance Settlement on Wirral's MTFP is an improvement of £6.28m, not including the potential further Council Tax increases referenced in paragraph 4.1. The following table summarises the impact of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement on Wirral Council's MTFP:

	2022/23 Budget £m	2023/24		
		MTFP assumption (£38.4m gap) £m	Provisional settlement £m	MTFP Impact £m
Business Rates Top-Up	(54.29)	(55.69)	(59.24)	(3.55)
New Homes Bonus	(0.44)	(0.30)	(0.44)	(0.14)
Social Care Grant	(19.77)	(26.77)	(32.15)	(5.38)*
Lower Tier Funding	(0.52)	(0.52)	0.00	0.52
2022/23 Services Grant	(5.62)	(3.91)	(3.16)	0.75
Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund	0.00	0.00	(4.22)	(4.22)*
ASC Discharge Fund	0.00	0.00	(2.70)	(2.70)*
Funding impact of LGFS measures				(14.72)
Corresponding pressures:				
Independent Living Fund removal			1.52	
Market Sustainability & Improvement Fund			4.22	
Discharge Fund			2.70	
Additional cost pressures				8.44
Total provisional 2023/24 MTFP impact				(6.28)
* Additional Adult Social Care related ringfenced grants				(12.30)

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 While the settlement brings an improvement to Wirral's MTFP position, the data outlined in this briefing note should be treated with caution as it is subject to change.
- 5.2 Firstly the settlement is provisional at this stage and is open to consultation until the 16th January 2023. Following the closure of the consultation period the settlement is subject to Parliament approval, and as such the data outlined above is subject to change.
- 5.3 The impact of the Business Rates Revaluation 2023 on Business Rates income is at this stage unclear. The estimated income generated from Business Rates for 2023/24, as well as the related Section 31 Grants for qualifying reliefs, will be analysed in detail in conjunction with the guidance when available. Such estimates have a deadline for completion and submission to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of 31st January 2023, and as such the impact of Business Rates income on the MTFP is not yet clear.

- 5.4 Similarly, the estimate of the Collection Fund position will impact the 2022/23 budget. This is a statutory process and is based on the latest data available on 15th January 2022 and therefore this will not be confirmed until late January.
- 5.6 It is important to remember that the government have only impacted a single -year settlement and the additional resources for 2023/24 only provide limited and short-term certainty while creating uncertainty for longer term financial planning.

Appendix 3 - List of Savings

Budget Saving Proposals can be placed into the following categories:

- Increasing Business Efficiencies
 - This approach will identify efficiency measures that will result in more effective ways in which services are currently provided and may include cost reduction.
- Increasing Income
 - The Council will look to identify areas where it can raise income through fees and charges.
- Changing how we fund or provide services
 - We aim to ensure that the right service reaches the right resident when and where they need it, for the best cost. This may mean changing how we fund or provide services so that we are able to reduce costs and maintain services by becoming more efficient and by doing things differently.
- Reducing or stopping services
 - Although all efforts will be made to keep service reduction to a minimum, the scale of the financial challenge means that not all reduction proposals can be avoided.

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY & TRANSPORT			
THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
Increasing Income	Introduction of Electric Vehicle charging scheme	Following a pilot, the Council is planning to introduce an electric vehicle charging policy and strategy that will introduce new charging points for electric vehicles generating a small income to the authority for re-investment.	£10,000
	Increase costs for Dropped Kerb service	The proposal would seek to increase the fees the Council applies to provide dropped kerbs outside people's houses to enable residents to access their drives. This will ensure full cost recovery to support the service.	£15,000
	Introduction of large format digital screen advertising opportunities	The Council plans to introduce large format, digital advertising screens in key gateway locations and small format free standing units in shopping areas to be used for commercial advertising to generate an income to the Council.	£20,000
	Review of Cemeteries and Crematoria service income	A review of income within Cemeteries and Crematoriums will look to increase income targets sustainable for future years.	£100,000
	Review of Pest Control service income	This option will increase the income target within the pest control team of Environmental Services in line with the recent demand for the service.	£10,000
	Review of bulky waste (ERIC) collections	The Bulky Waste collection service (ERIC service) currently collects up to 6 items for £32 per slot, with 120 slots available per week. The proposal is to reduce the number of items to 4 for £32 and increase the number of bookable slots by 5 per day - 145 per week.	£10,000

Increasing Income	Sale of Parks vehicles	A capital bid has been accepted for the procurement of new, efficient 'green' machinery. This saving would be achieved through the sale of the existing fleet, of which there are a number of vehicles that are high value.	£100,000
	Introduction of catering facilities at football playing fields	This option would see income generated through placement of outdoor catering pods at Arrowe Park Playing Fields and Levers Playing Fields to serve high footfall football traffic. A capital investment would be required.	£20,000
	Expansion of the camping offer at Wirral Country Park	This option would look to generate income through expanding the councils camping offer at Wirral Country Park.	£10,000
	Introduction of Pet Memorial Garden	This option would see an income generated through the development of a pet memorial garden for Wirral residents to commemorate their domestic pets.	£10,000
	Reintroduction of Christmas Markets at Birkenhead Park	This option would seek to restart Christmas Markets at Birkenhead Park. This model would see units / pitches being offered to traders who would pay a fee.	£10,000
	Introduction of an environmental enforcement scheme	This option proposes a move back to enforcement action against increasing levels of environmental crime including littering, dog fouling and fly tipping. The enforcement action will be undertaken by a 3rd party through an enforcement contract and would generate an income.	£150,000
Increasing Business Efficiencies	Capitalise Staff costs on infrastructure projects	A number of staff can be charged against the Council's capital programme budget leading to corresponding savings in the Council's revenue budget.	£60,000
	Review of Tree Management service	A redesign of the tree management service that will generate efficiency through the reduction of a vacant post and the generation of new income.	£50,000
	Restructure of the transport fleet	This option will deliver efficiencies through transport fleet and equipment remodelling and the introduction of replacement, alternative fuelled vehicles, and equipment.	£30,000
Changing how we fund or provide services	Environmental Health Service Review	A redesign of the Environmental Health Service to reduce the level of non-statutory provision and a reduction in staff by 1.5 FTE fixed term roles and 1 FTE permanent role.	£40,000
	Reduction in recycling promotional budget	This reflects a permanent, partial reduction of the Waste Team's recycling promotional budget from 2023/24.	£20,000
	Reduction in Waste & Environment Services budget	This option will make saving through partial reductions to elements of the Waste and Environmental Services budget.	£24,000

Reducing or stopping services	Reduction of non-statutory parks and countryside maintenance	The Parks and Countryside budget is approximately £4m. £3m of this is for statutory provision. Options have been brought forward to reduce the non-statutory element of the service by 50%.	£500,000
	Reduction in street cleansing	This option proposes the reduction in regular service street cleansing provision across the borough in residential areas, with a move to a reactive cleansing model. Cleansing would be undertaken in response to service requests and known hot spot/high demand locations. The service could still respond to fly tipping instances and service litter bins.	£500,000

TOURISM COMMUNITIES CULTURE & LEISURE			
THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
Increasing Income	Development of the events programme at Williamson Art Gallery	This option would look to generate income by developing the events programme at Williamson Art Gallery (weddings, formal dinners, birthday etc.). The option also includes savings from potential community asset transfer of the Transport Museum.	£70,000
	Review of current Neighbourhood Directorate assets/ buildings	This option would generate savings through a review of Neighbourhood Directorate assets, to identify properties/ buildings that could be considered for community asset transfer. There are currently no capital resources available from the Council in order to process CAT transfers.	£50,000
Increasing Business Efficiencies	Review of Neighbourhoods Staffing Structure	A re-structure in the Neighbourhoods Directorate that reflects a longer-term transformation plan to ensure the most efficient and cost-effective model of delivery.	£425,000
	Consolidation of under committed budgets across Neighbourhoods	This option will generate savings through a one-off collation of underspent budget lines across the service.	£60,000
	Leisure Centre service review	This saving option focuses on transformation of the service over 5-year period. The headline saving of £500k is for the first year's savings. This will focus on several key themes: energy efficiency measures, service restructures, contracts and commissioning arrangements and sales & marketing.	£500,000
Changing how we fund or provide services	Leisure Centre service review and closure of a council leisure centre	This saving option incorporates the transformation of the service saving of £500k along with the closure of one of the Council's leisure centres.	£1,000,000
	Reduce library service to 5 key sites	Wirral currently has 15 library sites. Footfall at all libraries has reduced and has not recovered from pre-pandemic levels. This option proposes a reduction in the service down to 5 sites.	£759,000

Changing how we fund or provide services	Relocation of Birkenhead & Wallasey Central libraries	This option proposes the relocation of Wirral's 2 Central libraries in Birkenhead and Wallasey from the two, current, high-cost sites into Birkenhead Town Hall and the Floral Pavilion respectively to reduce overall library service building running costs.	£280,000
	Reduce library service to 5 key sites & relocate central libraries	Wirral currently has 15 library sites. Footfall at all libraries has reduced and has not recovered from pre-pandemic levels. This option proposes a reduction in the service down to 5 sites as well as relocating Birkenhead and Wallasey sites into Birkenhead Town Hall and the Floral Pavilion.	£874,000
Reducing or stopping services	Temporary standing down of two council swimming pools	This proposal would involve standing down two of the Council's swimming pools to achieve savings in heating and running costs.	£850,000
	Closure of all non-statutory leisure services and activities	This option would involve stopping all Council leisure provision on the basis that it is a non-statutory, discretionary service that requires significant financial support from core Council budget which is forecast to increase further in 2023/24.	£4,900,000

CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION			
THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
Increasing Business Efficiencies	Reduction in Wirral's Looked After Children numbers	This saving reflects a reduction in Wirral's Looked After Children numbers as historic high levels align more with other authorities following practice improvements since 2019.	£410,000
	Reduction in Teacher's pension liabilities to the council	This saving reflects a reduction in Teacher's pension liabilities for the Council.	£190,000
	Review of Supporting Families funding and Early Help budgets	The proposal will involve investing the supporting families funding and Early help budgets effectively to reduce CIN and CP demand. The outlook is of increasing demand on frontline services as things return to normal post covid.	£1,121,000
	Review of contracts within Children's Services	A review will be undertaken to look at all contracts that are in place across Children's Services to explore where there are any efficiencies which can be achieved.	£250,000
	Review of council's contribution towards European Funded Send Inclusion Programme	This saving reflects the end of the Council's contribution towards a European Funded programme that will end at the end of 2022/23.	£220,000
	Reduction in financial support to Kingsway High School	Kingsway High School is being re-purposed for other educational uses and as such the occupier will pay the proportionate liability associated with the PFI deal, which will reduce costs and generate a financial saving.	£134,000
Changing how we	Reduction in contributions to the Regional Adoption	This saving reflects a reduction in contributions to the Regional Adoption Agency in line with the	£100,000

	Agency in line with the average number of referrals	average number of referrals reducing in recent years.	
	Increase the number of <i>children looked after</i> placed in family settings as opposed to higher cost residential settings	This proposal involves increasing the proportion of children placed in family settings and less in other settings such as residential and semi-independent settings. As family-based settings are lower cost than residential settings there is a cost reduction for the Council.	£1,100,000
	Remodelling of social care and early help	The proposal will involve the redesign and restructure of the Assessment and Intervention Service in Children and Families and the Family Matters service to provide one single service.	£655,000
Reducing or stopping services	Removal of budget supporting Play Services schemes	Wirral currently has 3 of out of hours and weekend play schemes. This service, which employs 9 staff, supports child development and education through play and is non-statutory. Play services currently operate at: Leasowe Adventure Playground, Gautby Play Scheme, Beechwood Play scheme as they are targeted in areas of greatest need. The option would remove this service altogether.	£284,000
	Reduction of Youth services offer to minimum statutory service	This service, which employs 68 staff, includes a youth club provision in each of the 9 neighbourhoods, detached youth workers covering the borough, and an annual contribution to the Hive Youth Zone. A number of options have been brought forward to reduce the service. This option would see the service being reduced to a statutory minimum provision.	£666,000
	Removal of budget supporting Creative Youth offer	Creative Youth Development employs 10 staff and delivers targeted packages of support to young people in crisis or with special educational needs and disabilities using a range of creative arts as therapeutic tools. The service is non-statutory, and options have been brought forward to reduce the service. This option would involve the service stopping altogether.	£343,000

THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
Changing how we fund or provide services	Review of all-age disability transition planning	This programme will focus on transition planning to better prepare young people with care and health needs for adulthood through tailored and more creative approaches to meeting care and support needs. A review of practice and approaches to transition planning will see needs identified earlier, with planned care and support leading to the delivery of the efficiency target.	£1,000,000
	Review of services to support Independent Living	A range of Demand Management initiatives will deliver the required efficiency savings. These are related to technology enabled care provision, increasing take up of Direct Payments as a cost-effective way to meet people's needs, utilising an increased range of extra care and supported housing options, and continuing to embed The Three Conversations approach to requests for care and support.	£4,935,000

ECONOMY REGENERATION AND HOUSING			
THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
Increasing Income	One off rental income for partial leasing of Cheshire Lines office space	The NHS CCG will be occupying some of the space in Cheshire Lines Building and paying a contribution towards the lease and running of costs. As the lease on Cheshire Lines is due to end in April 2024, this is a one year only income for 23-24.	£146,000
	Lease income from rental of floors 4 & 5 at Marris House	The Council had leased the 4th and 5th Floors of Marris House, with the break clause having been implemented and the lease terminated in July 22. Any make good work on the return of the lease have been met from the 22/23-part year saving on the lease costs. Full savings will be achievable for 23-24.	£136,000
	Increase eligible rechargeable costs for Building Control services	This option would generate income through increasing the eligible rechargeable costs in the areas of building control and housing services and is based on the assumptions on what can be recharged to fee income in the areas of building control, street names and numbering and land charges.	£80,000
Increasing Business Efficiencies	Review of Merseytravel levy budget	The Merseytravel levy is set by the Combined Authority, which includes any changes identified in the City Region population levels and demographics. This option will realise a saving through the financial difference between the budget set for the levy and the actual levy cost.	£122,000
	Capitalisation of salaries (Re-direction of qualifying salaries away from the council's central budget	This proposal will include a change to re-direct qualifying salaries away from the council's central budget. This will apply to staff within Assets division work on the school's capital programme, which enhances and creates schools' assets and is funded via grant.	£85,000
Increasing Business Efficiency	Stand down and disposal of a number of council owned buildings	This option is a continuation of a project that was commissioned in 2019 to review the accommodation strategy of the Council. Savings will be made on the	£672,000

		assumption that the buildings will all be empty, and functions “stood down” completed by 31 st March 2021 and disposed of no later than 31 st March 2023.	
	Decommissioning of the Solar Campus site and relocation of teams currently working from the facility.	This option will see a partial in-year saving through decommissioning of the Solar Campus and relocation of teams currently working from the facility. Full stand down savings will be realised in 24/25.	£5,000
	Standing down of Wallasey Town Hall for a 12-month period	In 2023/24, the North and South Annexes are being demolished and this will effectively put the Town Hall between two demolition sites for most of the year. This will have practical implications on the use of, and access to the building. Savings will therefore be realised through the standing down of Wallasey Town Hall for 2023/24.	£400,000
	redesign and review of contract commissioning for Economic Growth	This option will see savings made through the redesign of the specification for services completed prior to commissioning and the subsequent competitive price achieved through tendering.	£65,000
	Recharging of staff costs where eligible grant funding is in place for Economic Growth projects	This option will see a one-off saving of staff cost recovery from grant funding. This relates to eligible work across several regeneration programmes where a proportion of permanent staffing costs can be recharged for staffing time including European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Town Deal.	£71,500
	Recharging of staff costs where eligible grant funding is in place for Homes for Ukraine Resettlement Programme	This option will see a one-off saving of staff cost recovery from grant funding. This relates to eligible work undertaken for the Resettlement Programme associated with responding to the Homes for Ukraine.	£593,110
	Recharging of costs where eligible grant and fee income is rechargeable within Supported Housing services	This option would realise savings where grant and fee income are rechargeable. This includes eligible costs associated with Private Rented Sector Housing Licensing, the Healthy Homes service and works linked to the Disabled Facilities Grant.	£59,600
Changing how we fund or provide services	Re-provision of homeless accommodation and review of community alarm grant	This option is a follow on from savings implemented in 22/23 that can again be realised in 23/24 – this being re-provision of homeless accommodation and review of grant to current eligible customers for the community alarm/response services charges.	£137,000
	Review of Housing Support service and Fuel Poverty contract	This proposal will realise efficiencies by moving to a single low level floating housing support service, as well as a review of the Fuel Poverty contract.	£87,500

POLICY AND RESOURCES

THEME	OPTION	DESCRIPTION	SAVING
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Increasing Business Efficiencies	Review of digital systems within the Revenue and Benefits service	This option will generate efficiencies through increased use of automation within Revenues & Benefits reducing the need for double keying and manual intervention from staff.	£100,000
	Review of council funded trade union representatives	The Council currently funds salaries for four full time trade union reps for UNISON. Funding was in place initially for three reps, but this was increased to a fourth, on a temporary basis, during the pandemic and been absorbed into the core budget. This option will realise a saving by returning to financially supporting just three full reps.	£35,000
	Review of current payroll functions	This option will realise saving through a review of the council's current payroll functions in order to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies.	£60,000
	Review of enabling (back office) services across the council	This option will bring forward a review of all enabling (back office) services across the whole organisation to identify economies of scale and opportunities for greater centralisation of these services.	£2,300,000
	Review of senior management structure	This option brings forward a package of senior management savings across the whole organisation to be achieved primarily through vacancy management.	£800,000
Reducing or stopping services	Corporate Office Restructure	This option will generate efficiencies and reduction in budget through a re-structure of the PA hub, which takes account of the changes in duties arising within this cohort since the move to remote and hybrid working. The review is inextricably linked with the review of the Chief Officer structure.	£70,000
Increasing Business Efficiencies	Use of NNDR reserve - one off	Use of the residual sum of £3m to balance budget shortfall.	£3,000,000
	Insurance reserve - one off	Following a review of Insurance Reserves, a figure of £1m can be release on one off basis.	£1,000,000
	Reprice pay budgets at mid-point	To this point council pay budgets have been costed at highest spinal point. This adjustment re-costs pay budget at mid-point which is normal for the sector and appropriate of pay commitments of this council.	£2,800,000
	Apply vacancy factor to pay budgets	A vacancy factor has been calculated in detail for each directorate of the council.	£2,300,000
	Council wide budget adjustment	Adjust operational budgets applying a factor of tenth of 1%	£440,000

Increasing Income	DSG contribution to statutory functions	This was a correction of the previous base estimate.	£1,200,000
	Increase Council Tax / ASC Levy by 2% to a total of 4.99%	Council Tax increase beyond base assumption	£3,260,000

1.0 Wirral ‘Have Your Say’ Consultation

1.1 The approach to the initial consultation was twofold; firstly, in terms of service impact consultation (where a budget option has a direct impact on reducing the level of provision of a specific service) and secondly, to gauge the opinions and priorities of our residents as to what council services matter most to them, and where they believe the council should be focusing its efforts to help develop the budget plan – this was presented via an online budget simulator.

1.2 Both were delivered through the council’s ‘Have Your Say’ platform in the form of a ‘Hub’. This approach provided users with one single location through which to engage in the service consultations and participate in the budget simulator exercise. <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/hub-page/budget-2023-24>

Projects within the Hub include:

1. Street Cleansing Budget Option
2. Library Services Budget Option
3. Leisure Services Budget Option
4. Parks & Countryside Budget Option
5. Youth Services Budget Option
6. Budget Simulator

1.3 To ensure the consultations were as accessible as possible, a social and digital sub campaign was also carried out, which included regular messaging, targeted demographical and geographical communications, resident e-newsletters, and regular theme specific stories, linking with the narrative, and urging residents and stakeholders to take part in the consultation. communication channels included (but not limited to):

1. Social media messaging across a variety of platforms
2. Dedicated email address (for comments, ideas, request for paper copies etc)
3. Paper copies in libraries and leisure centres
4. WirralView news channel – article and links
5. Links and details in weekly Resident E-Newsletter
6. Digital and social links to the ‘Have Your Say’ Hub
7. Online redirection through local news platforms
8. Council website notices
9. Internal / Staff communications
10. Local media briefing/ media management
11. Member briefing
12. Sharing of links and paper copy locations with CVF sector

***The following data and findings are true as of 5.1.22. Consultation remains live at this date.**

1.4 **Parks and Countryside** <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-parks>

At present, the online consultation has engaged 484 respondents*. Users were asked their opinion on:

1. A 50% reduction in the maintenance budget (effecting non-statutory works at a selection of parks across the parks and countryside services estate).

Current sentiment:

- a. 80% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 6% neutral
- c. 14% Strongly agree/agree

2. A 25% reduction in the maintenance budget (effecting non-statutory works at a smaller selection of parks across the parks and countryside services estate).

Current sentiment:

- a. 64% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 7% neutral
- c. 29% Strongly agree/agree

An open question is also included for respondents to register qualitative feedback.

1.5 **Leisure Services** <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-leisure-services>

At present, the online consultation has engaged 453 respondents*. Users were asked their opinion on:

1. A Discontinuation to provide Leisure Services across the borough.

Current sentiment:

- a. 86% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 3% neutral
- c. 11% Strongly agree/agree

2. The Possible closure of two swimming pools

Current sentiment:

- a. 56% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 7% neutral
- c. 37% Strongly agree/agree

3. A reduction in the number of leisure centre sites the council owns and manages.

Current sentiment:

- a. 53% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 9% neutral
- c. 38% Strongly agree/agree

An open question is also included for respondents to register qualitative feedback.

1.6 **Library Services** <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-leisure-services>

At present, the online consultation has engaged 459 respondents*. Users were asked their opinion on:

1. A relocation of the council's two biggest and most expensive library sites to operate, Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries.

Current sentiment:

- a. 46% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 7% neutral
- c. 47% Strongly agree/agree

2. Reducing the size of the library service to provide a small number of key, geographically located sites, supported by a wide-ranging online, digital and mobile library offer.

Current sentiment:

- a. 58% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 7% neutral
- c. 35% Strongly agree/agree

3. The moving of some library sites into other council buildings, reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides. (Retaining an online and digital service and deploying a mobile library service).

Current sentiment:

- a. 40% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 8% neutral
- c. 52% Strongly agree/agree

An open question is also included for respondents to register qualitative feedback.

1.7 **Street Cleansing** https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-street-cleansing/survey_tools/budget-2023-24-street-cleansing

At present, the online consultation has engaged 322 respondents*. Users were asked their opinion on:

1. Moving to a reactive model of street cleaning (cleansing undertaken in response to service requests and in known hot spot/ high demand locations).

Current sentiment:

- a. 54% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 10% neutral
- c. 36% Strongly agree/agree

2. A reduction in cleansing schedules would see a move from 4-weekly to 12-weekly cleansing schedules across the whole borough (retaining 4-weekly alleyway cleanse service.)

Current sentiment:

- a. 56% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 9% neutral
- c. 35% Strongly agree/agree

An open question is also included for respondents to register qualitative feedback.

1.8 **Youth Services Street Cleansing** https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-youth-services/survey_tools/budget-2023-24-youth-services

In order to increase and ensure engagement for Wirral's under 18 residents, a Microsoft Forms version of the consultation was produced. Preliminary findings below will therefore reflect both versions.

At present, the online consultation has engaged 151 respondents through the 'Have Your Say'(HYS) hub, and 740 through the MS Forms (MSF) channel.* Users were asked their opinion on:

1. The closure of Pilgrim Street Arts Centre and re-provision of services to either an 'outreach' or 'pop-up' offer.

Current sentiment: (HYS)

- a. 67% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 10% neutral
- c. 23% Strongly agree/agree

Current sentiment: (MSF)

- a. 69% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 10% neutral
- c. 21% Strongly agree/agree

2. The removal of the Play Services budget.

Current sentiment: (HYS)

- a. 62% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 7% neutral
- c. 31% Strongly agree/agree

Current sentiment: (MSF)

- a. 78% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 4% neutral
- c. 18% Strongly agree/agree

3. The reduction of the council's Youth Services offer.

Current sentiment: (HYS)

- a. 72% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 6% neutral
- c. 22% Strongly agree/agree

Current sentiment: (MSF)

- a. 80% Strongly disagree/disagree
- b. 5% neutral
- c. 15% Strongly agree/agree

An open question is also included for respondents to register qualitative feedback.

1.9 **Budget Simulator** <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/budget-2023-24-simulator>

The budget simulator is easy to use and allows residents to reduce spending across council services and see the consequences of their choices. There is also opportunity to provide comments, which will help us understand what is important when we come to set a legal budget.

At present, the online simulator has engaged 640 respondents*

The below chart indicates the average expenditure change for each slider reflecting resident priorities:

Adult Social Care & Health	
Adult Social Care commissioned services	-20.70%
Children, Families & Education	
Early Help & Prevention	-13.63%
Education & Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support	-12.11%
Children's Social Care & Safeguarding	-9.45%
Neighbourhood Services	
Community Safety	-18.09%
Highways and Infrastructure	-18.91%
Leisure, Libraries & Customer Engagement	-24.06%
Parks & Environment	-23.24%
Resources	
Revenues & Benefits	-25.35%
Regeneration	
Regeneration	-26.05%
Housing	-20.78%
Planning	-29.26%
Support Services	
Support Services	-28.40%



Have your say

Budget 2023-24: Leisure Services

LEISURE SERVICES Budget Options



Consultation: 8 December 2022 – 15 January 2023

Report: 17 January 2023

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Sport and Recreation service provides a wide range of facilities and activities including swimming pools, gyms, fitness classes, football pitches, sports halls, and athletics tracks.

Providing these services is not a statutory responsibility, i.e., not something the Council has to do by law. However, we do recognise the importance of having these facilities, and what they mean to our communities.

The use of our leisure centres and the income they make has unfortunately never returned to the levels we saw before the pandemic. This, together with the unprecedented rises in energy prices means that Wirral's sport and recreation offer faces the same difficult challenges as the rest of the leisure industry.

This widening gap between the amount of income generated by the service and the cost of running centres means that we may need to make some tough decisions.

The proposals look to find savings through reducing the current Sport & Recreation service offer.

Public consultation was held on the Leisure Budget Options from 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023 allowing people to provide their view of the options. The findings from the consultation are included in this report.

The findings will be considered at the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee on the 25 January 2023.



1.1 Key Findings

- The questionnaire was responded to by 804 people. 593 responses came via the online portal and 211 paper copies were received.
- 87.9% of respondents are in disagreement with the statement 'The Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services.' 74.4% strongly disagreed with the statement. 9.0% of respondents were in agreement. (Question 1)
- Most respondents (60.4%) are in disagreement with the statement 'The Council could consider closing two pools.' The most common response to this statement was Strongly disagree (43.1%). 30.9% supported the statement. (Question 2)
- 59.1% do not believe that that council could consider reducing the number of leisure centres it manages and operates. 40.8% strongly disagree with the council considering a reduction in the number of leisure centres managed. 31.8% were in agreement. (Question 3)
- When asked for additional comments, the most common themes found in responses were: (Question 4)
 - Exercise / Health / Wellbeing, closure of leisure facilities would worsen the health and wellbeing of Wirral residents, mentioned in 39.8% of responses.
 - Accessibility, a reduction in the leisure offering may deny some access to facilities (18.0%).
 - Invest in Leisure, WBC should improve leisure facilities to increase demand (13.6%).
 - Better management of the current facilities would increase demand (13.6%).
 - Advertise, promotion is needed to increase awareness of WBC's leisure offering (10.5%).
 - Children would be denied access through facility closure (10.2%).
- Demographic analysis allowed the responses to be categorised by ward. The most represented ward was Oxtown (12.4%) and the least represented was Rock Ferry (0.6%).

2.0 Methodology

The consultation was carried out between 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk

A budget consultation Hub was created within the platform which provided users with one single location through which to engage in individual service consultations and access a Budget Simulator tool <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/hub-page/budget-2023-24> Within the Hub there was a page dedicated to the Leisure Budget Options consultation.

An online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies or for help completing the questionnaire, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online tool.

Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered at the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee on the 25 January 2023.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding resident views on the options presented for reducing the cost of the leisure services. Key areas in the options included reducing the number of Leisure Centres operated by the Council, reducing the number of swimming pools open to the public and consideration of discontinuing to provide Leisure Services.

To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns. Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment questions, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report.

2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.



2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- Free-text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, with free-text responses were categorised using a coding system. The percentages given reflect the percentage of respondents who made the comment and as they may have made more than one comment, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

2.4 Direct Representations

Contact details were provided to enable organisation, groups, or special interest groups to directly submit their responses to the budget proposals.

2.5 Communication

To ensure the consultations were as accessible as possible, a social and digital sub campaign was carried out, which included regular messaging, targeted demographical and geographical communications, resident e-newsletters, and regular theme specific stories, linking with the narrative, and urging residents and stakeholders to take part in the consultation. communication channels included (but not limited to):

- Social media messaging across a variety of platforms.
- Dedicated email address (for comments, ideas, request for paper copies etc).
- Paper copies in libraries and leisure centres.
- WirralView news channel – article and links.
- Links and details in weekly Resident E-Newsletter.
- Digital and social links to the ‘Have Your Say’ Hub.
- Online redirection through local news platforms.
- Council website notices.
- Internal / Staff communications.
- Local media briefing/ media management.
- Member briefing.
- Sharing of links and paper copy locations with CVF sector.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 804 people. 593 responses came through the online portal, 211 paper copies were completed. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

3.1.1 Question 1: The Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services

In response to 'The Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services,' the most common answer was 'Strongly disagree', supported by 74.4% of the 800 responses. In total, 87.9% of respondents were in disagreement with the statement, and 9.0% supported the statement.

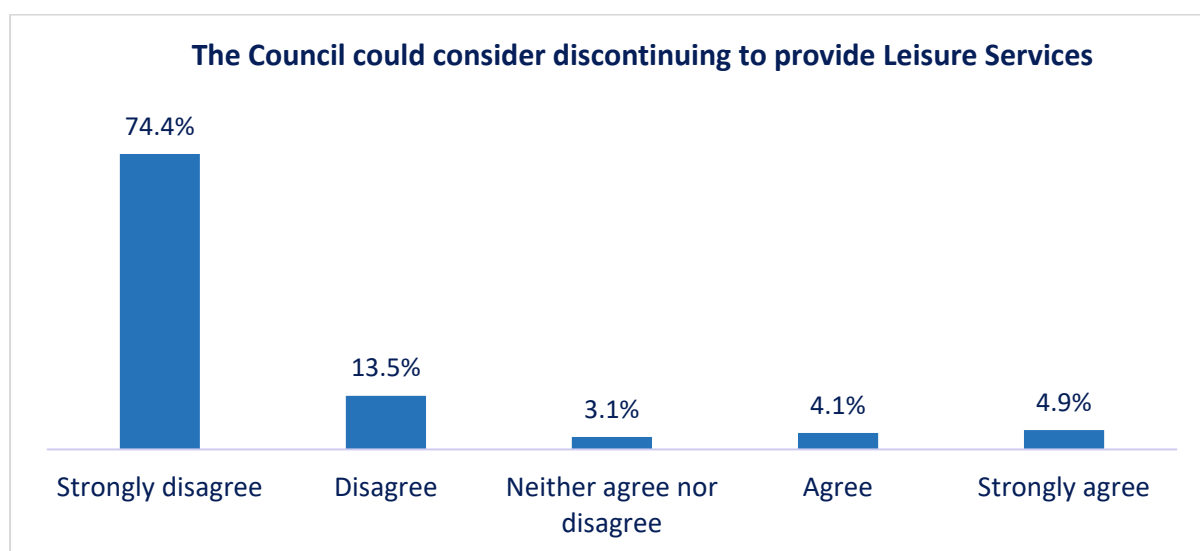


Figure 1: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services”

The Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services	Total	%
Strongly disagree	595	74.4%
Disagree	108	13.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	25	3.1%
Agree	33	4.1%
Strongly agree	39	4.9%
Total	800	100.0%

Table 1: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider discontinuing to provide Leisure Services”

3.1.2 Question 2: The Council could consider closing two pools

In response to 'The Council could consider closing two pools,' the most common answer was 'Strongly disagree', supported by 43.1% of the 796 responses. In total, 60.4% of respondents were in disagreement with the statement, and 30.9% were in agreement.

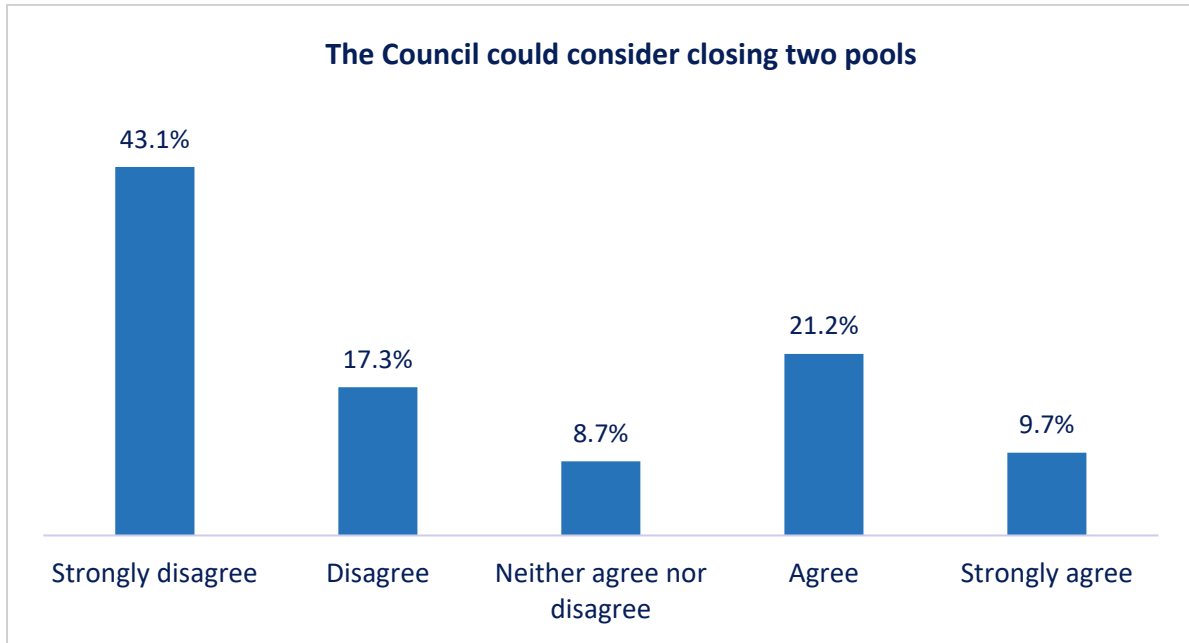


Figure 2: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider closing two pools”

The Council could consider closing two pools	Total	%
Strongly disagree	343	43.1%
Disagree	138	17.3%
Neither agree nor disagree	69	8.7%
Agree	169	21.2%
Strongly agree	77	9.7%
Total	796	100.0%

Table 2: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider closing two pools”



3.1.3 Question 3: The Council could consider reducing the overall number of Leisure Centres it manages and operates

In response to 'The Council could consider reducing the overall number of Leisure Centres it manages and operates,' the most common answer was 'Strongly disagree', supported by 40.8% of the 801 responses. In total, 59.1% of respondents were in disagreement with the statement, and 31.8% were in agreement.

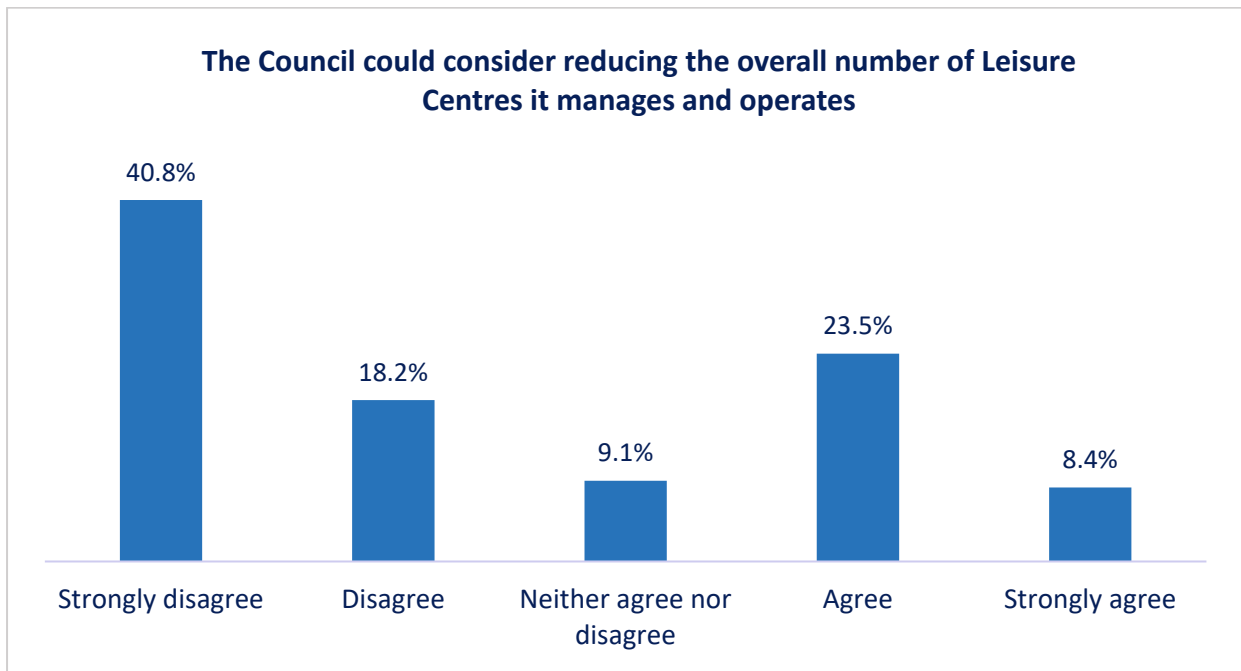


Figure 3: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider reducing the overall number of Leisure Centres it manages and operates”

The Council could consider reducing the overall number of Leisure Centres it manages and operates	Total	%
Strongly disagree	327	40.8%
Disagree	146	18.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	73	9.1%
Agree	188	23.5%
Strongly agree	67	8.4%
Total	801	100.0%

Table 3: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider reducing the overall number of Leisure Centres it manages and operates”



3.1.4 Question 4: If you have any comments

Respondents were asked if they had any additional comments regarding the leisure services consultation. 440 people responded to this question. Each comment has been categorised into themes in order to identify the over-riding sentiments amongst the comments.

Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%

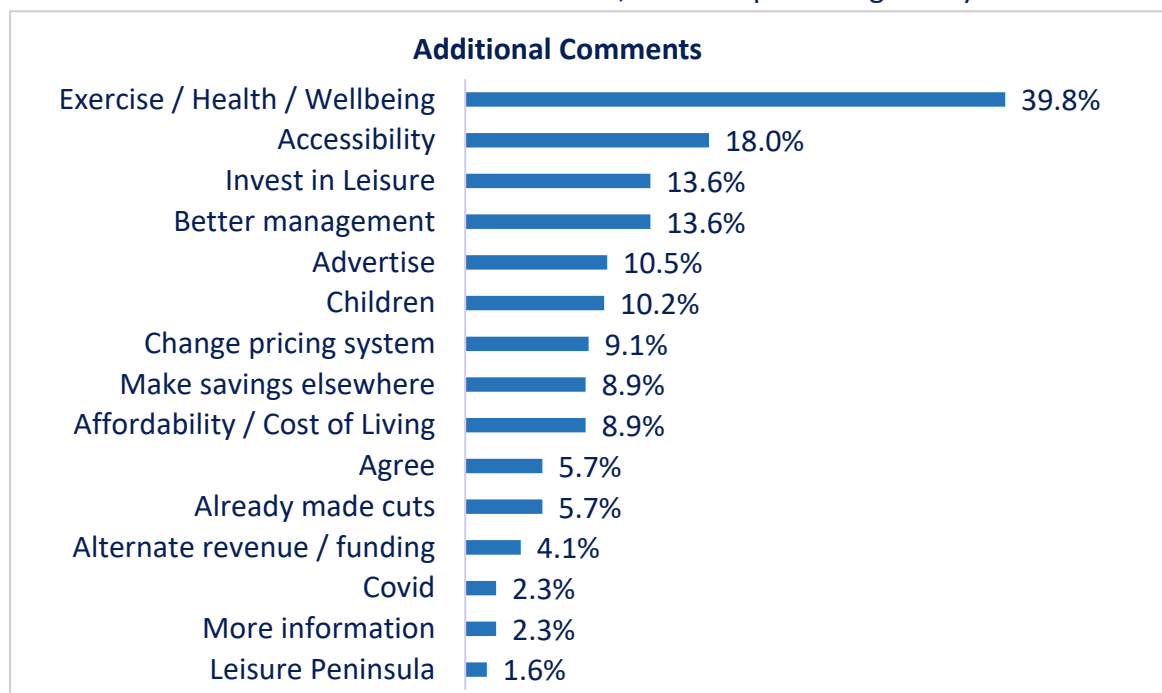


Figure 4: Chart displaying top additional comment themes

Additional comments categories	Total	%
Exercise / Health / Wellbeing	175	39.8%
Accessibility	79	18.0%
Invest in Leisure	60	13.6%
Better management	60	13.6%
Advertise	46	10.5%
Children	45	10.2%
Change pricing system	40	9.1%
Make savings elsewhere	39	8.9%
Affordability / Cost of Living	39	8.9%
Agree	25	5.7%
Already made cuts	25	5.7%
Alternate revenue / funding	18	4.1%
Covid	10	2.3%
More information required to make a decision	10	2.3%
Leisure Peninsula	7	1.6%

Table 4: Table displaying top additional comment themes

- **Exercise / Health / Wellbeing (39.8%)** of the 440 comments mentioned that a reduction in WBC's leisure services would have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of Wirral residents. Consequently, many argued that reduced access to exercise would result in increased future healthcare costs, so cuts to leisure services would be a false economy.
- **Accessibility (18.0%).** 79 respondents believe that a reduction in WBC's leisure services would reduce Wirral residents' access to leisure. This would particularly impact poorer residents, people without access to vehicles and residents with mobility issues. Many believed that if closures were to take place, accessibility should be considered, and the remaining leisure services should be easily accessible to all with regular and short journey public transport.
- **Invest in Leisure (13.6%).** 60 responses argued that the quoted 20% reduction in the demand for leisure is due to the state of the current facilities. It was argued that rather than close the leisure services, WBC should invest into improving the service offering which would increase the demand for leisure. Resultantly, the investment could pay for itself.
- **Better management (13.6%).** 60 responses believe that the current facilities could be better managed, instead of closed completely. Many comments mentioned that the leisure facilities are not open at convenient times, and that opening hours should be extended. Additionally, the services offered at the facilities could be tweaked to better cater to demand. For example, more gym classes offered outside of standard working hours. The contents of the classes could be changed to better meet demand. In summary, comments reflected a frustration that council Leisure facilities are not being run as private facilities would be.
- **Advertise (10.5%).** 46 respondents believe that to tackle the reduction in demand, the council should promote its leisure services. Many commented that they were not aware that the councils' facilities had returned to normal operations following coronavirus restrictions. A common suggestion was to offer discounted subscriptions to young people, and to make them aware of the leisure centres existence.
- **Children (10.2%).** Mentioned in 45 responses, a reduction in leisure services would deny Children access. As a result, many children may not learn to swim with lessons already in high demand. Respondents felt this is particularly important given the Wirral peninsula's coastline.

3.2 Direct Representations

One direct representation was received from an individual. The representation is included in Appendix 1.

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below. The same questions were included on the paper-copy questionnaires.

Most respondents (88.1%) classed themselves as local residents.

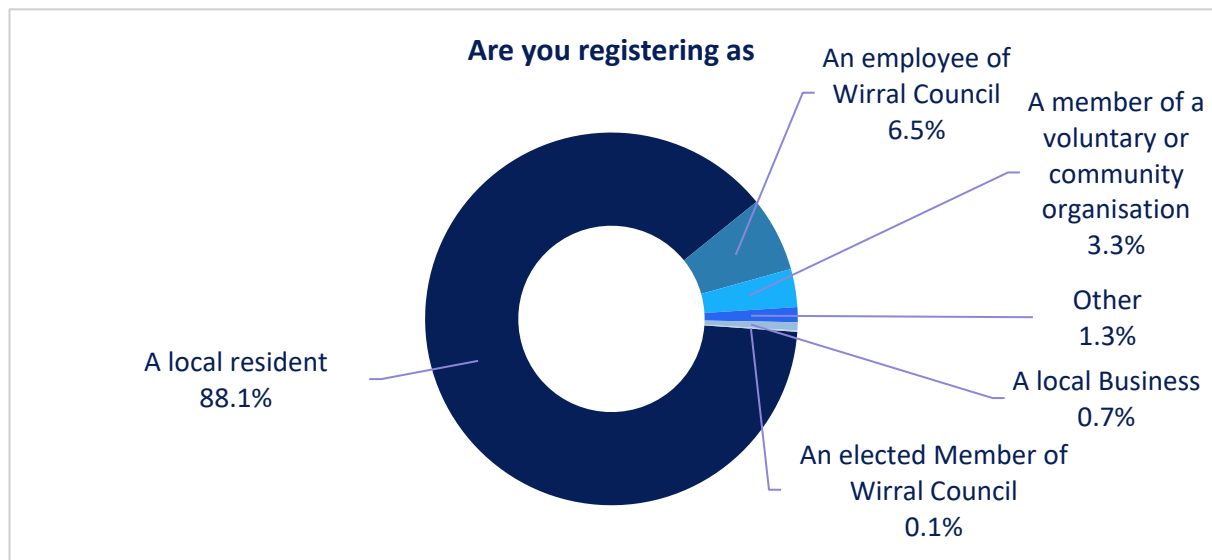


Figure 5: Chart displaying registering

The age group profile is illustrated below with the most common age groups being 55-64 years (23.4%), followed by 65-74 years (22.5%) and 45-54 years (19.2%). Under 24's made up 1.3% of respondents.

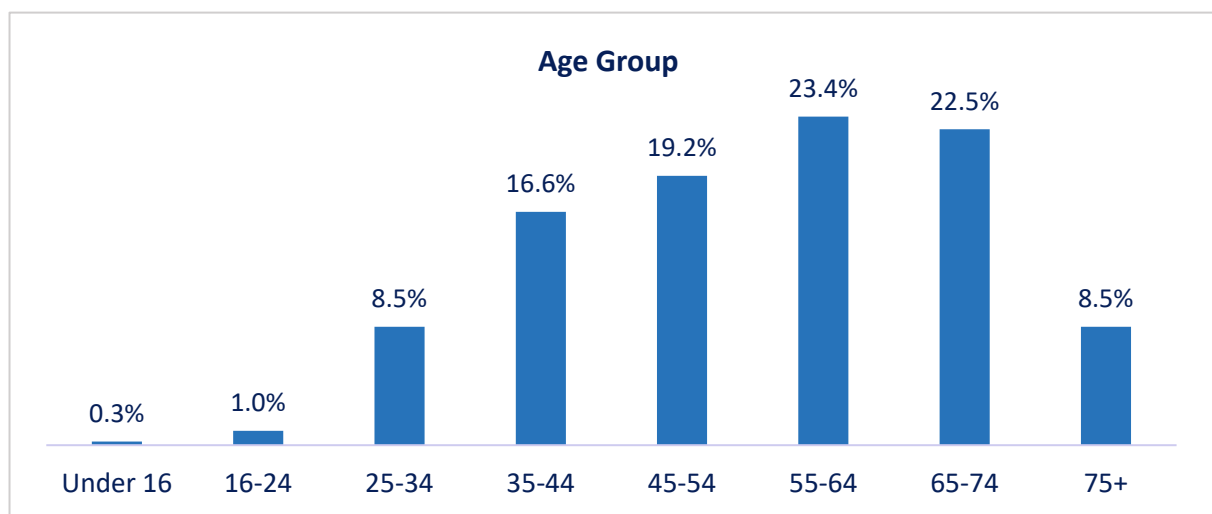


Figure 6: Chart displaying age groups

56.9% of respondents identified as female and, 40.6% male. 2.3% preferred not to say and 0.3% preferring to use their own term.

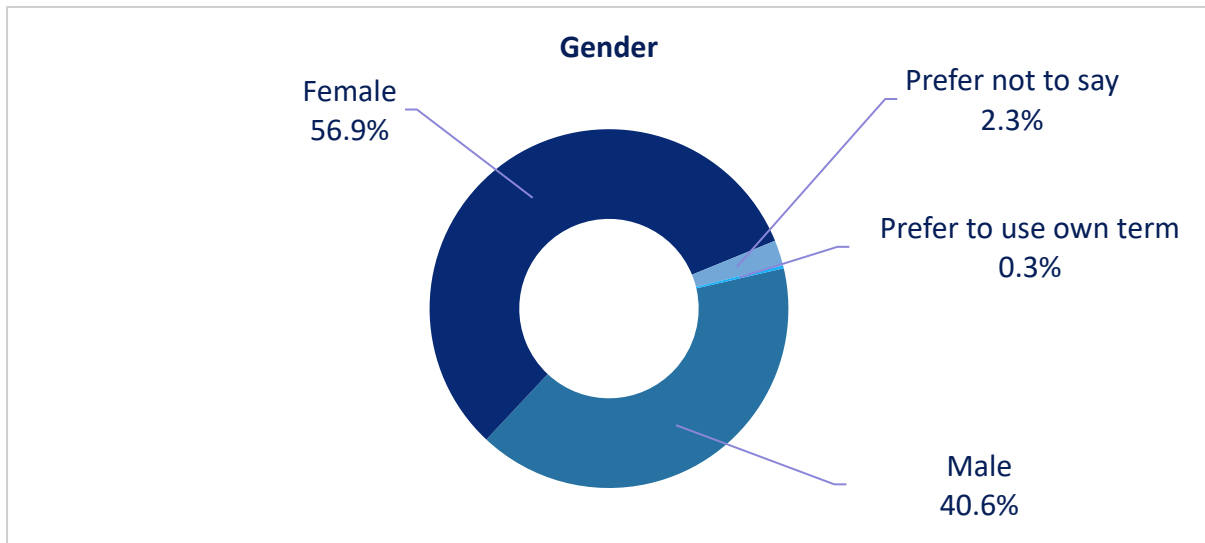


Figure 7: Chart displaying gender

85.9% of respondents were heterosexual, 1.3% were gay/ lesbian, 1.1% bisexual and 11.7% preferred not to say.

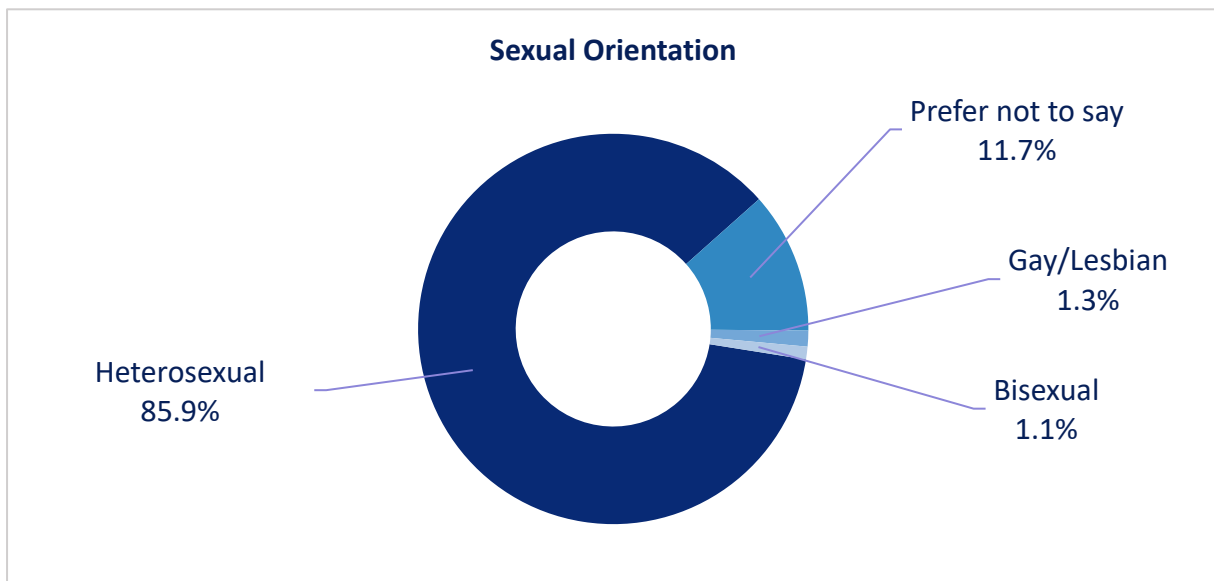


Figure 8: Chart displaying sexual orientation



83.0% said they did not have a disability whilst 10.5% of respondents said that they had a disability, 6.4% preferred not to say.

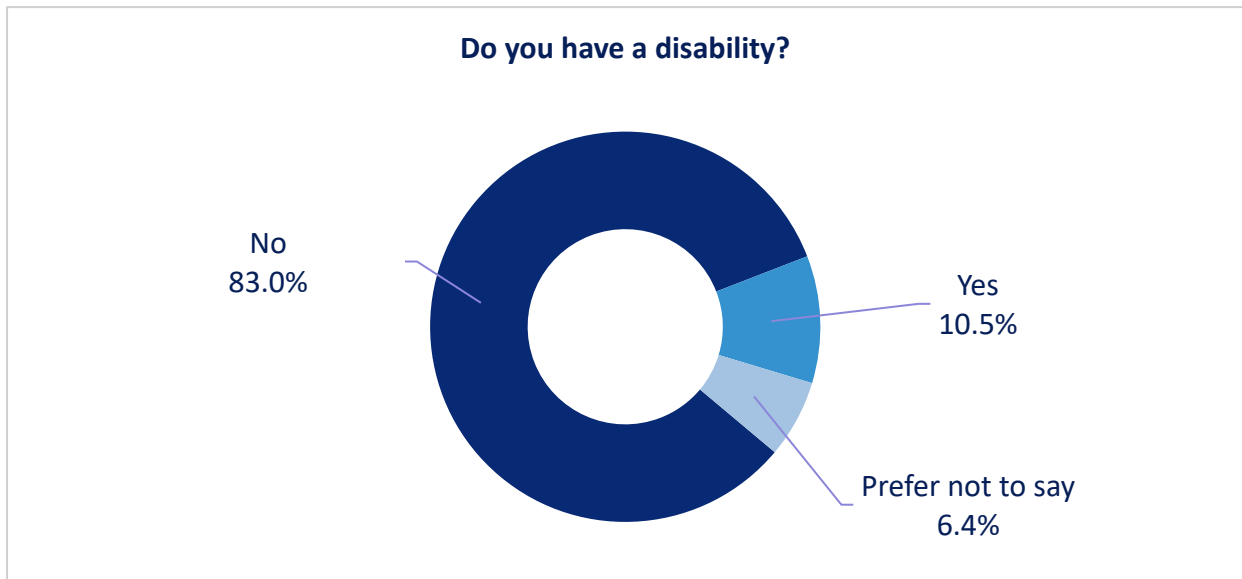


Figure 9: Chart displaying disability

The majority (95.1%) of respondents identified as White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British.

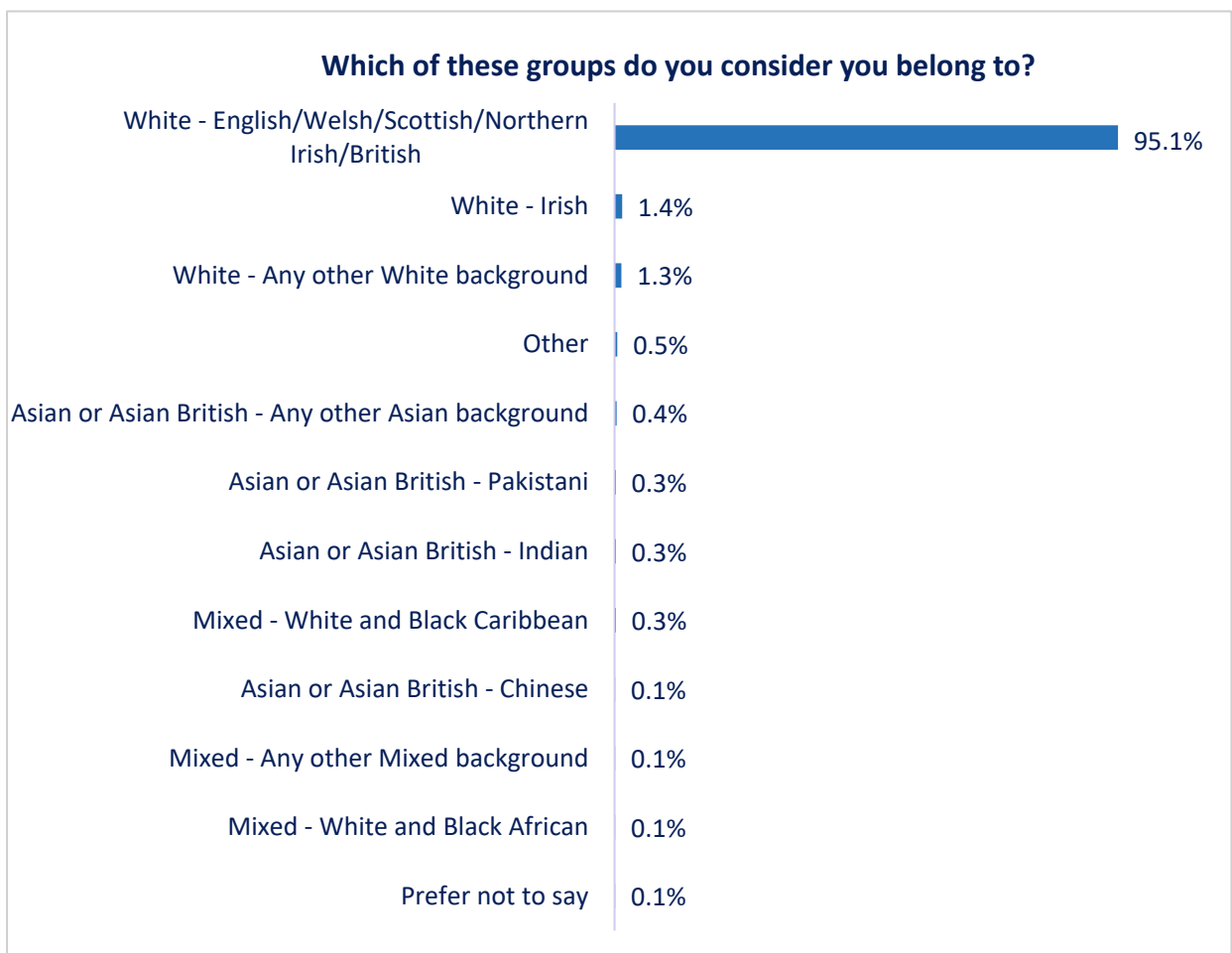


Figure 10: Chart displaying groups



The most represented ward was Oxton (12.4%) followed by New Brighton (10.6%) and Wallasey (9.5%). Each of the 22 wards received some representation.

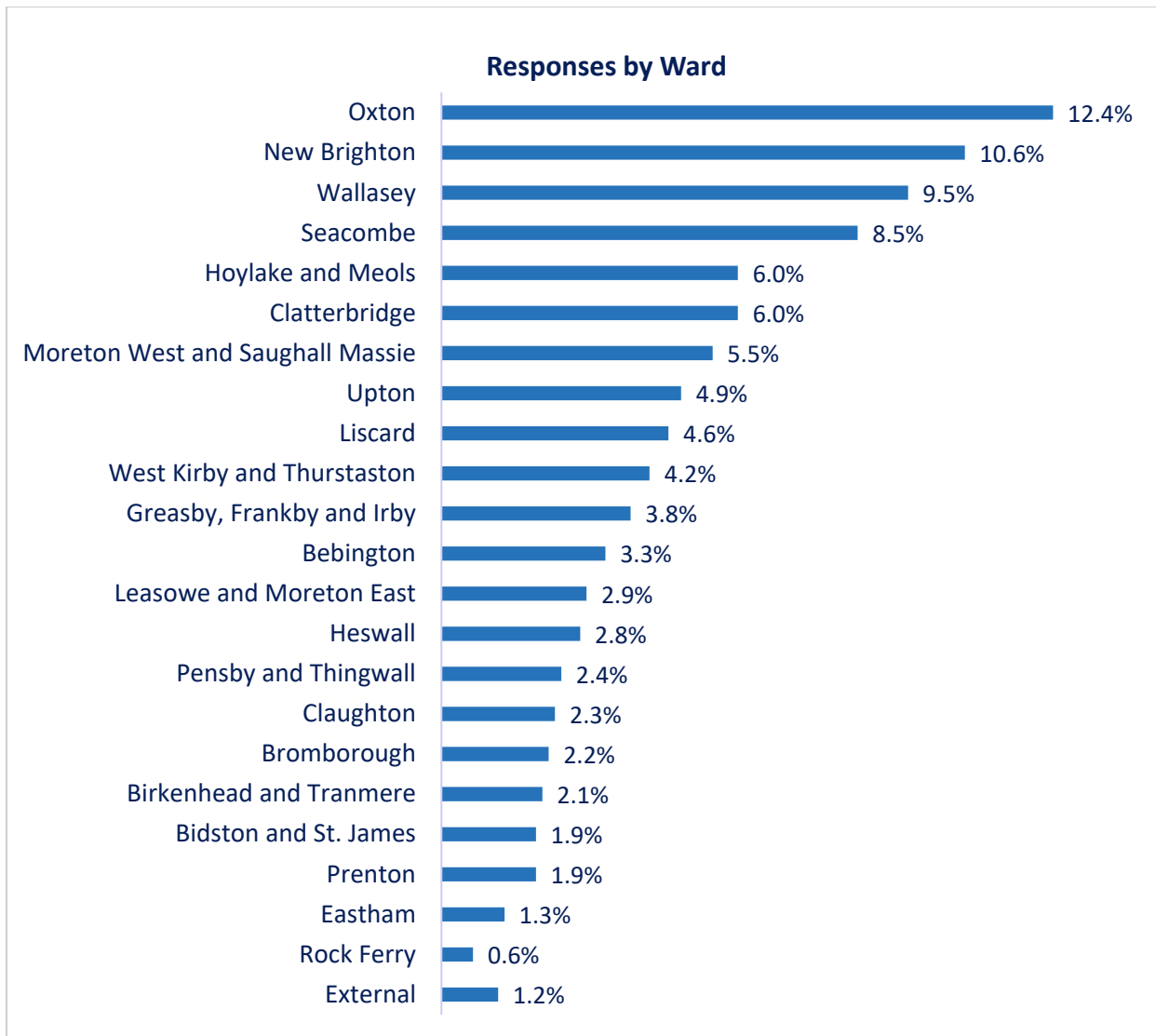


Figure 11: Chart displaying Wirral Ward representation



4.2 Have Your Say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future. 1970 unique visitors viewed the consultation page of the Have Your Say website. Of these, 736 visited multiple project pages and 105 viewed a photo. 593 people in total completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were either links clicked from social media sites (496) or direct visits where people typed the internet address into their web browser (1365). It should be noted that direct visits generated a much higher rate of engagement of 27.2%, meaning 27.2% of these visits resulted in completion of the survey, whereas Social Media visits had an engagement rate of 15.1%.

Traffic Source	Aware Visits	Informed Visits (%)	Engaged Visits (%)
Direct	1365	920 (67.4%)	371 (27.2%)
Social	496	291 (58.7%)	75 (15.1%)
Email	126	88 (69.8%)	48 (38.1%)
Search engine	132	97 (73.5%)	59 (44.7%)
.gov	13	11 (84.6%)	8 (61.5%)
Referrals	99	79 (79.8%)	32 (32.3%)
Total	2231	1486	593

Table 5: Site traffic sources

Appendix 1: Direct Representations

REPRESENTATION FROM AN INDIVIDUAL

I would ask the council to look at capping any increase on golf fees for 2023. Not only were two courses closed last year but in addition monthly payments rose to £39 for the two remaining courses, the Warren and Arrowe Park.



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Have your say

Budget 2023-24: Library Services

LIBRARY SERVICES Budget Options



Consultation: 8 December 2022 – 15 January 2023

Report: 17 January 2023

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Council currently provides fifteen library sites in Wirral from where residents can borrow books, use computer and internet facilities, and attend events. Physical library usage and book borrowing has been in decline for a number of years, as online and digital media has increased in popularity.

Post pandemic use of libraries has seen a further decline in the way that residents use libraries, and the introduction of more digital access and online services, has added to this.

The Council must fund the operation and maintenance of all library buildings and although libraries do generate a modest income, it is not enough to cover the costs of the Library Service.

This proposal will look to find savings through reducing the current library offer.

Public consultation was held on the Library Budget Option from 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023 allowing people to provide their view of the options. The findings from the consultation are included in this report.

The findings will be considered at the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee on the 25 January 2023.



1.1 Key Findings

- The questionnaire was responded to by 951 people. 745 responses came through the online portal, 206 paper copies were completed.
- 55.7% of the respondents were in disagreement with the proposal to consider relocating Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries into other Council buildings, in the same area, that are not fully used. 42.5% strongly disagreed. 30.8% were in agreement (Question 1).
- 64.7% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal that the Council could consider reducing the size of its library service, 45.5% strongly disagreed. 28.1% were in agreement.

Out of the 3 proposals put forward in this consultation this one garnered the highest levels of disagreement. (Question 2).

- 57.9% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal to consider moving some of its library sites into other Council buildings, reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides. 40.2% strongly disagreed. 33.2% were in agreement (Question 3).
- Amongst the additional free text comments, the most prevalent themes were jointly: (Question 4)
 - Cuts to library services will disproportionately affect the most deprived and vulnerable in society (30.2%).
 - The importance of libraries to communities (30.2%), and the idea that they are “more than just a place to borrow books”.
- Demographic analysis allowed the responses to be categorised by ward. New Brighton (13.5%) and Wallasey (12.2%) were the most represented Wirral wards. Eastham (1.1%) and Bidston and St James (1.5%) were the least well represented.

2.0 Methodology

The consultation was carried out between 8 December 2022 to 15 January 2023. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk

A budget consultation Hub was created within the platform which provided users with one single location through which to engage in individual service consultations and access a Budget Simulator tool <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/hub-page/budget-2023-24> Within the Hub there was a page dedicated to the Library Budget Options consultation.

An online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies or for help completing the questionnaire, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online tool.

Following the consultation, the feedback will be considered at the Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee on the 25 January 2023.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding resident views on the options presented for reducing the cost of the library services. Key areas in the options included relocation of sites to other Council buildings, reducing the size of the library service, deployment of a mobile library and provision of an online digital library offer.

To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns. Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment questions, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report.

2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:



- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information on the opinion of those residents who engaged.
- Free-text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, with free-text responses were categorised using a coding system. The percentages given reflect the percentage of respondents who made the comment and as they may have made more than one comment, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

2.4 Direct Representations

Contact details were provided to enable organisation, groups, or special interest groups to directly submit their responses to the budget proposals.

2.5 Communication

To ensure the consultations were as accessible as possible, a social and digital sub campaign was carried out, which included regular messaging, targeted demographical and geographical communications, resident e-newsletters, and regular theme specific stories, linking with the narrative, and urging residents and stakeholders to take part in the consultation. communication channels included (but not limited to):

- Social media messaging across a variety of platforms.
- Dedicated email address (for comments, ideas, request for paper copies etc).
- Paper copies in libraries and leisure centres.
- WirralView news channel – article and links.
- Links and details in weekly Resident E-Newsletter.
- Digital and social links to the ‘Have Your Say’ Hub.
- Online redirection through local news platforms.
- Council website notices.
- Internal / Staff communications.
- Local media briefing/ media management.
- Member briefing.
- Sharing of links and paper copy locations with CVF sector.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 951 people. 745 responses came through the online portal, 206 paper copies were completed. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

3.1.1 Question 1: The Council could consider relocating Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries into other Council buildings, in the same area, that are not fully used

943 people answered this question. Respondents selected their corresponding level of agreement with the statement offered.

55.7% of the respondents were in disagreement with the proposal (42.5% strongly disagree and 13.1% disagree) whilst 38.0% were in agreement (17.2% strongly agree and 20.8% agree). 6.4% neither agreed nor disagreed.

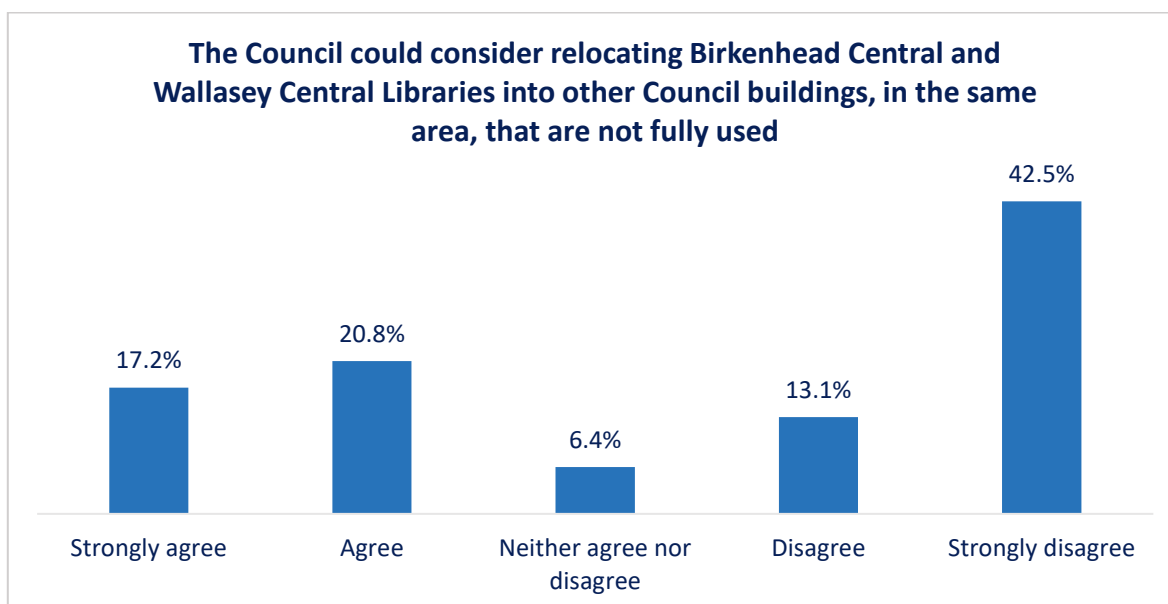


Figure 1: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider relocating Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries into other Council buildings, in the same area, that are not fully used”



The Council could consider relocating Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central Libraries into other Council buildings, in the same area, that are not fully used	Total	%
Strongly agree	162	17.2%
Agree	196	20.8%
Neither agree nor disagree	60	6.4%
Disagree	124	13.1%
Strongly disagree	401	42.5%
Total	943	100.0%

Table 1: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider relocating Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries into other Council buildings, in the same area, that are not fully used”



3.1.2 Question 2: The Council could consider reducing the size of its library service

945 people answered this question. Respondents selected their corresponding level of agreement with the statement offered.

64.7% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal (45.5% strongly disagree and 19.2% disagree) whilst 28.1% were in agreement (10.9% strongly agree and 17.2% agree). 7.2% neither agreed nor disagreed.

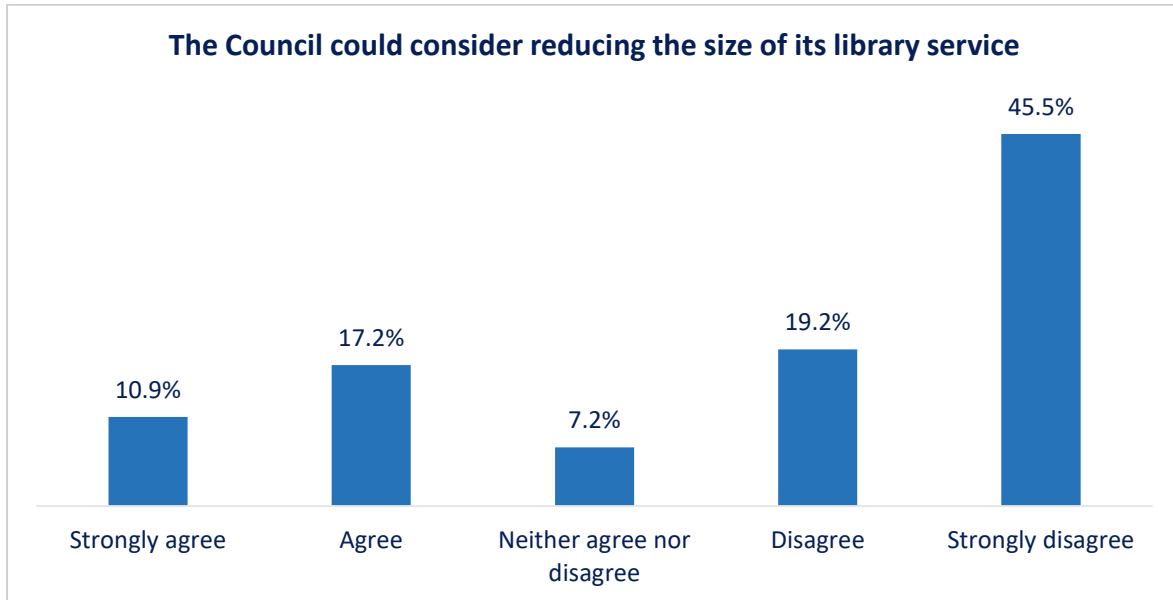


Figure 2: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider reducing the size of its library service”

The Council could consider reducing the size of its library service	Total	%
Strongly agree	103	10.9%
Agree	163	17.2%
Neither agree nor disagree	68	7.2%
Disagree	181	19.2%
Strongly disagree	430	45.5%
Total	945	100.0%

Table 2: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider reducing the size of its library service”

3.1.3 Question 3: The Council could consider moving some of its library sites into other Council buildings reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides

945 people answered this question. Respondents selected their corresponding level of agreement with the statement offered.

57.9% of the responses were in disagreement with the proposal (40.2% strongly disagree and 17.7% disagree) whilst 33.2% were in agreement (13.8% strongly agree and 19.5% agree). 8.9% neither agreed nor disagreed.

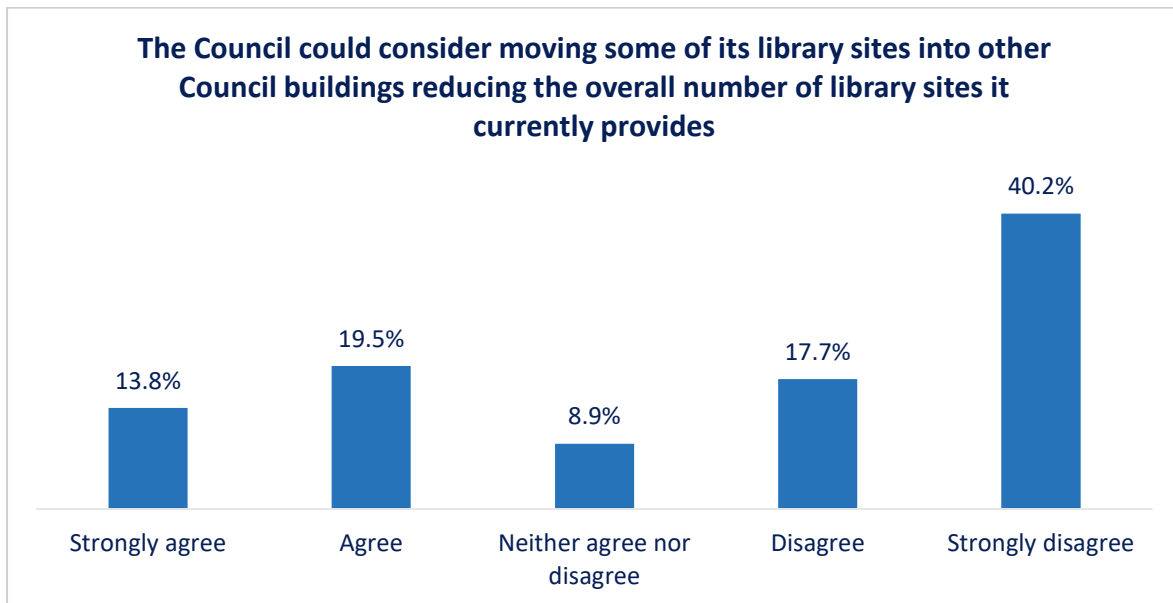


Figure 3: Chart displaying results to “the Council could consider moving some of its library sites into other Council buildings reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides”

The Council could consider moving some of its library sites into other Council buildings reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides	Total	%
Strongly agree	130	13.8%
Agree	184	19.5%
Neither agree nor disagree	84	8.9%
Disagree	167	17.7%
Strongly disagree	380	40.2%
Total	945	100.0%

Table 3: Table displaying the results to “the Council could consider moving some of its library sites into other Council buildings reducing the overall number of library sites it currently provides”

3.1.4 Question 4: Additional comments

287 people answered this free text question.

Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

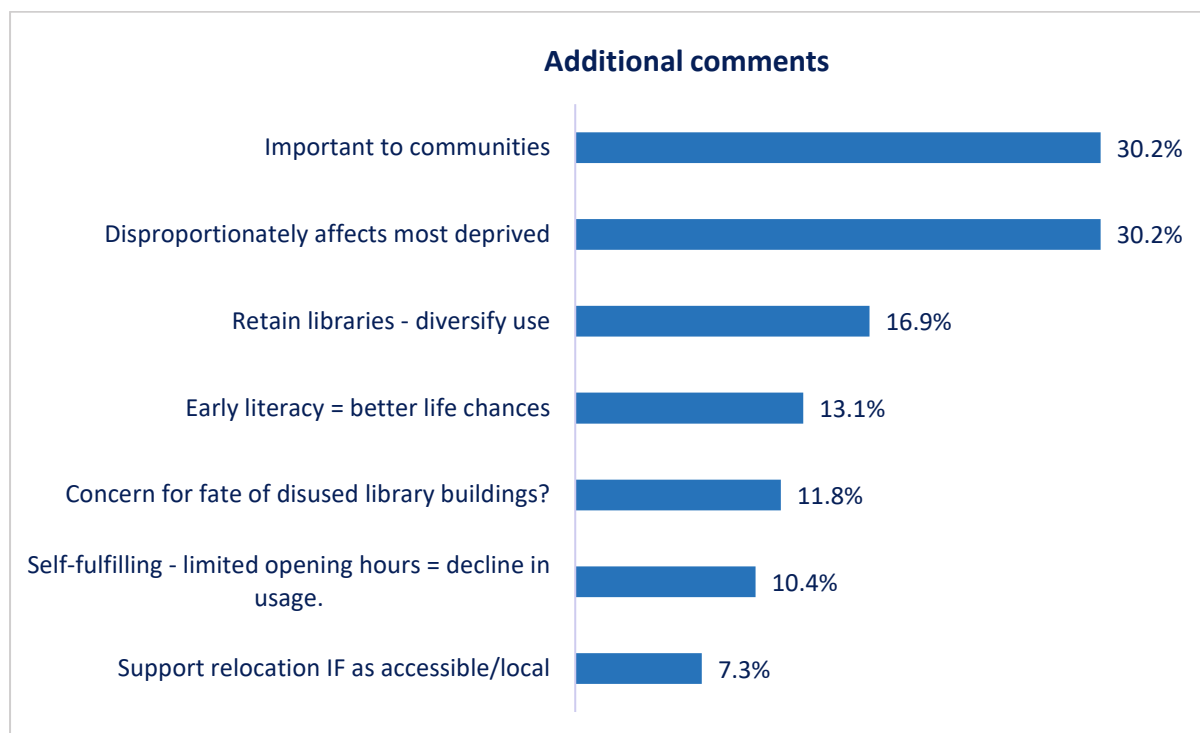


Figure 4: Chart displaying top themes among additional comments

Additional Comments: Top themes	Total	%
Important to communities	166	30.2%
Disproportionately affects most deprived	166	30.2%
Retain libraries - diversify use	93	16.9%
Early literacy = better life chances	72	13.1%
Concern for fate of disused library buildings?	65	11.8%
Self-fulfilling - limited opening hours = decline in usage.	57	10.4%
Support relocation IF as accessible/local	40	7.3%

Table 4: Table displaying top themes among additional comments

- Cuts to library services will disproportionately affect the most deprived and vulnerable in society (30.2%).** Those who do not have the facilities to access digital content will be unable to access not only free books and audio books online, but also the in-person support currently available in the libraries. Furthermore, closing or relocating local libraries will mean travel, at cost, to more remote sites, again

disadvantaging those who can least afford this and in effect removing their access to library services altogether.

- **The importance of libraries to communities (30.2%),** and the idea that they are “more than just a place to borrow books”. They offer safe, warm, cost-free spaces, the opportunity to interact with others and join in community activities.
- **Increase profitability and usage of libraries via diversification of use (16.9%).** Suggestions are varied but include the addition of cafes to libraries, hiring out venue space for local groups/parties/meetings and/or providing chargeable hot desks for remote working.
- **Early literacy is an important determinant of future life chances (13.1%).** Removing or reducing library services will reduce the life chances of Wirral’s children. Libraries help to foster an early love of reading, and physical books are preferable to consuming content via a screen.
- **Concern for the fate of disused library buildings (11.8%).** Particularly Birkenhead and Wallasey libraries, which are housed in historic buildings that are important to the local area. There is concern that buildings will be allowed to become derelict, contributing to the decline of local areas, or, in the case of historic buildings, lost to unwelcome development.
- **Decline in usage is self-fulfilling (10.4%)** The failure to fully open following the pandemic, and the ongoing severely reduced opening hours have contributed to a false picture of declining usage. It is also noted that borrowing figures do not necessarily reflect usage/footfall.
- **Tentative support for relocation depending on new sites (7.3%)** A common theme was that relocation might be supported if the chosen sites remained sufficiently local and accessible, but that currently there was not enough detail as to proposed sites to agree with the proposal.

3.2 Direct Representations

Three direct representations were received from individual Library users. The representations are included in Appendix 1.

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Library Services consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below. The same questions were included on the paper-copy questionnaires.

Most respondents (87.7%) classed themselves as local residents.

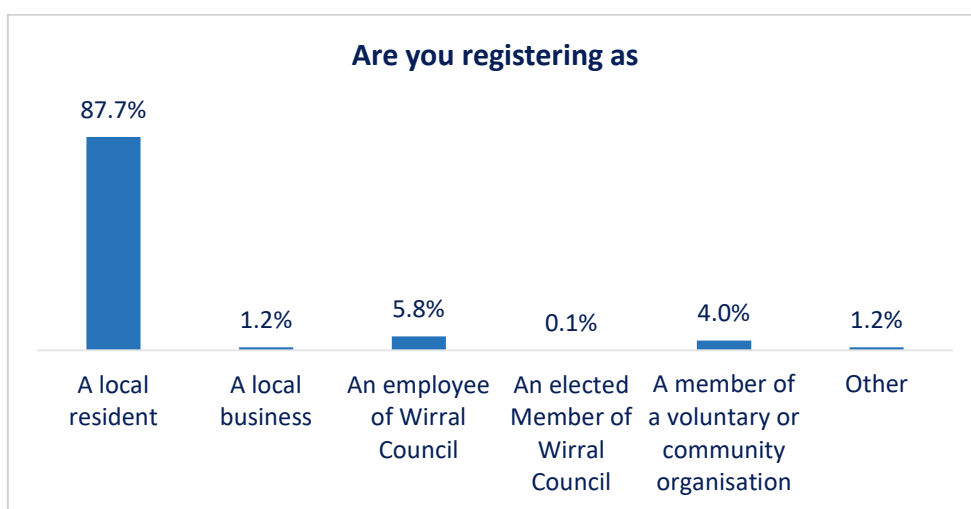


Figure 5: Chart displaying who respondents are registering as

The age group profile is illustrated below with the most common age groups being 65-47 years (22.6%), followed by 55-64 years (22.2%) and 35-44 years (19.5%). Under 24 years only made up 1.6% of respondents.

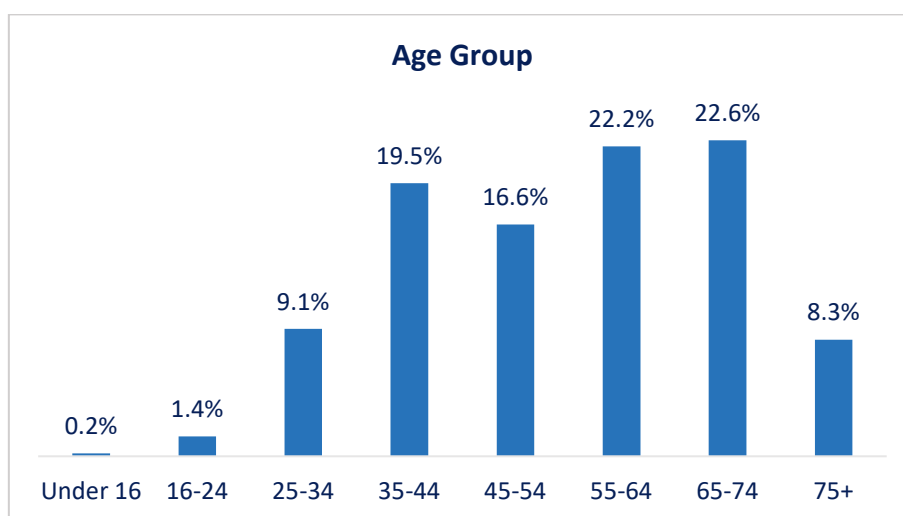


Figure 6: Chart displaying age groups



63.7% of respondents identified as female and, 32.5% male. 3.5% preferred not to say and 0.3% preferred to use their own term.

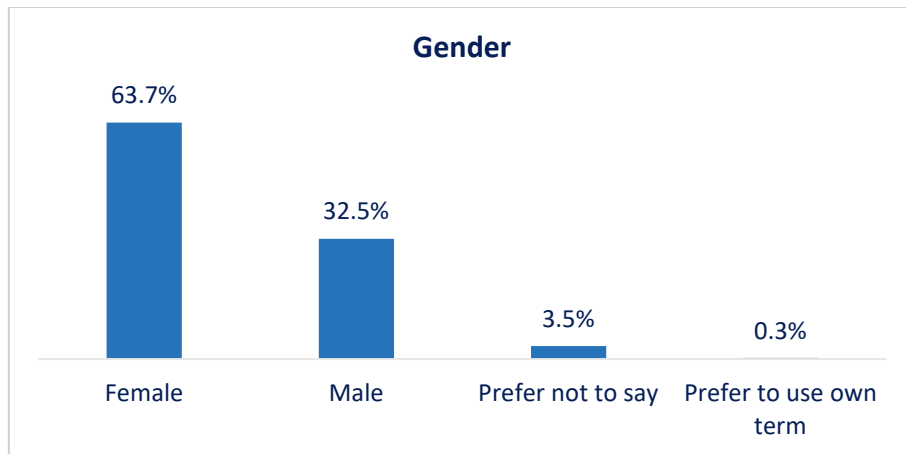


Figure 7: Chart displaying gender

82.6% of respondents were heterosexual, 1.3% were gay/ lesbian, 1.7% bisexual and 14.3% preferred not to say.

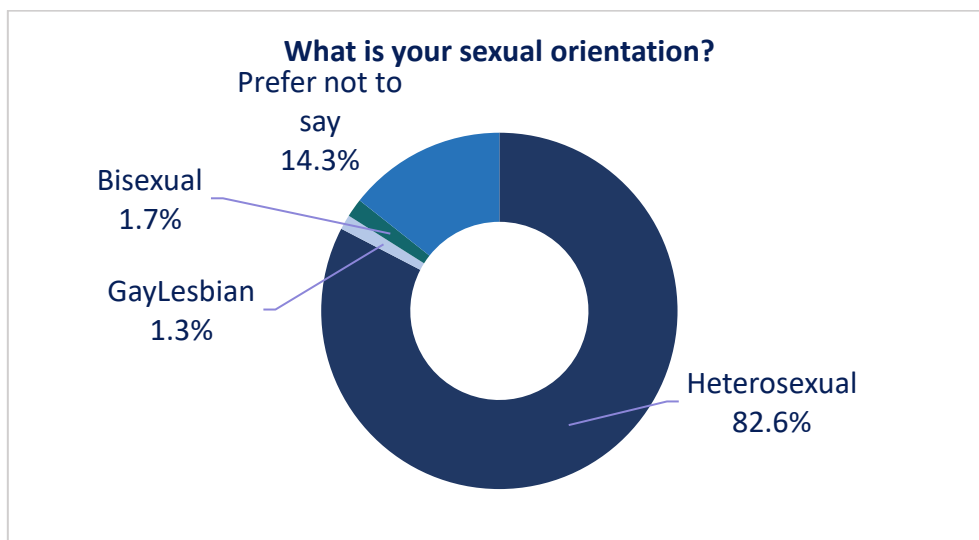


Figure 8: Chart displaying sexual orientation

81.2% said they did not have a disability whilst 12.2% of respondents said that they had a disability, 6.6% preferred not to say.

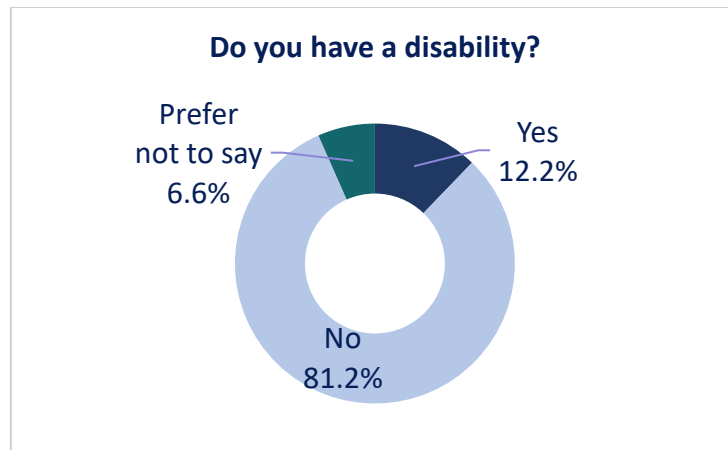


Figure 9: Chart displaying disability

The majority (93.3%) of respondents identified as White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British. 6.7% of respondents were not from White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British backgrounds.

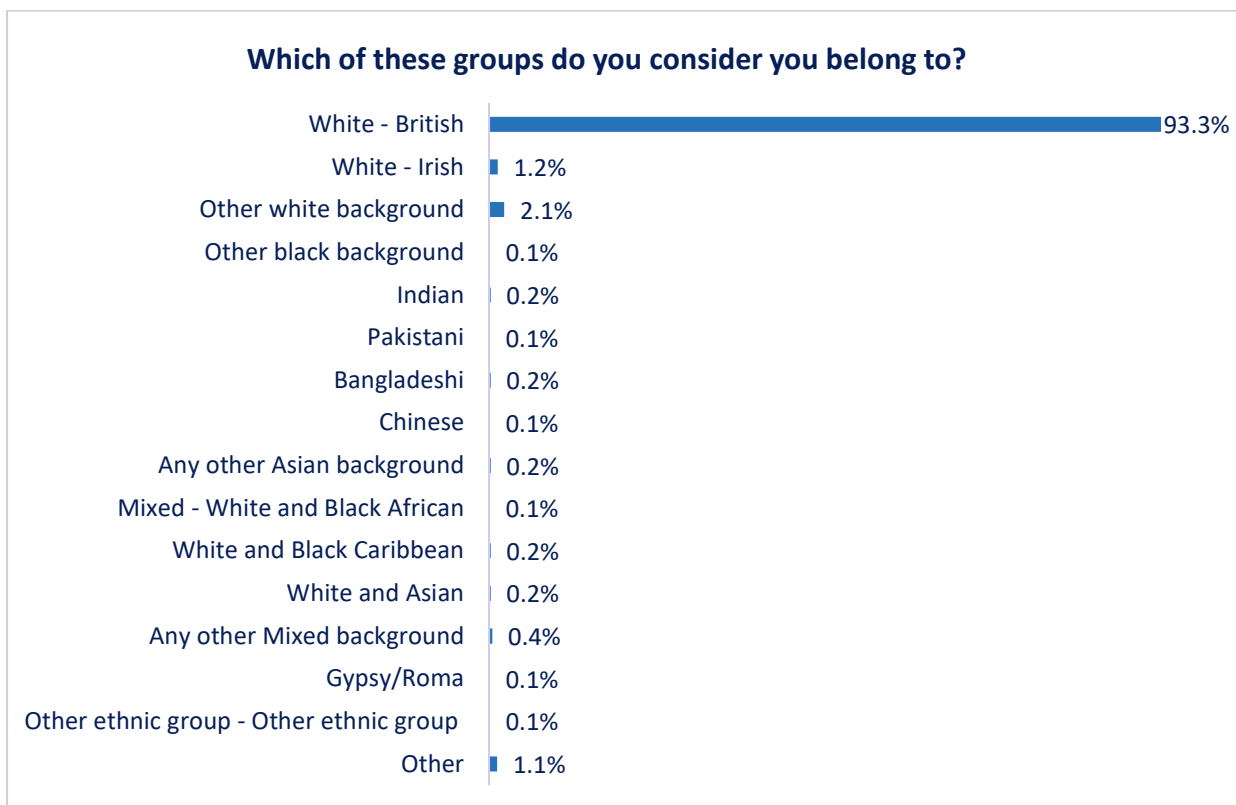


Figure 10: Chart displaying ethnicity of respondents



The most represented ward was New Brighton (13.5%) followed by Wallasey (12.2%) and Greasby, Franky and Irby (10.1%). Eastham (1.1%) and Bidston and St James (1.5%) were the least well represented.

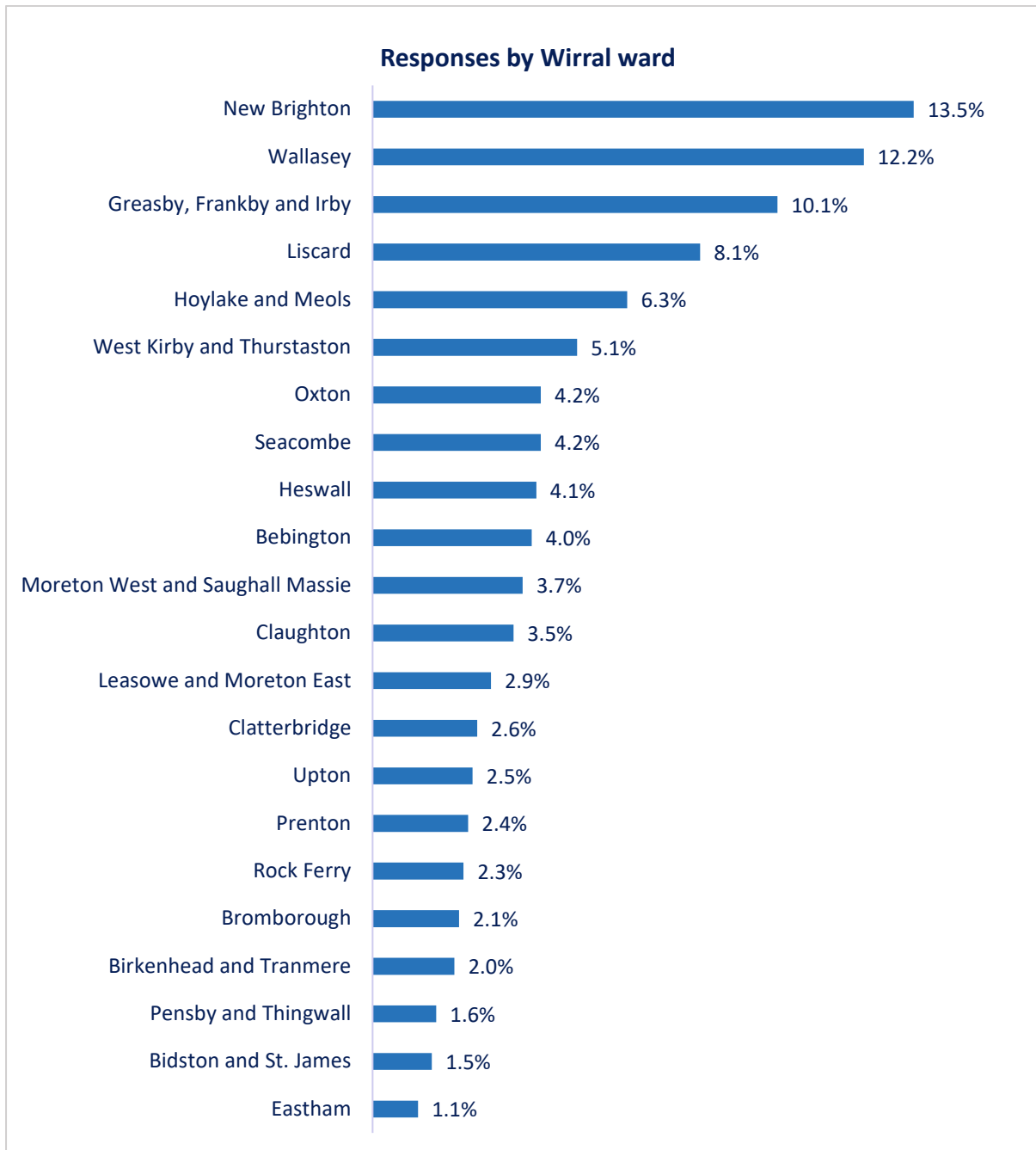


Figure 11: Chart displaying Wirral Ward representation



4.2 Have Your Say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future. 1643 unique visitors viewed the ‘Budget: 2023-24 Library Services’ consultation page of the Have Your Say site. Of these, 864 visited multiple project pages and 105 viewed a photo. 745 people in total completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were or direct visits where people typed the internet address into their web browser (1,236), followed by links clicked from social media sites (897). It should be noted that Direct visits generated a much higher rate of engagement of 31.5%, meaning 31.5% of these visits resulted in completion of the survey, whereas Social Media visits had an engagement rate of 15.2%.

Traffic Source	Aware Visits	Informed Visits (%)	Engaged Visits (%)
DIRECT	1236	766 (62%)	389 (31.5%)
SOCIAL	897	547 (61%)	136 (15.2%)
EMAIL	200	132 (66%)	54 (27%)
SEARCH ENGINE	213	153 (71.8%)	74 (34.7%)
GOV SITES	145	122 (84.1%)	47 (32.4%)
REFERRALS	121	91 (75.2%)	45 (37.2%)

Table 5: Site traffic sources

Appendix 1: Direct Representations

INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION 1

I am writing to tell you of my concern for the future of our Wallasey central library. I have been using this library for 50 years and in all that time I have never been disappointed or discouraged by the service and welcome I have received in this lovely building. It's not just a place to borrow a book. It's a place to meet people, to enjoy the ambience of a wonderful place and to learn or find out about everything under the sun.

I feel that the thing that separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom is our ability to strive for more than just shelter and food. Obviously they are of supreme importance but to bring everything down to cost is a terrifyingly dangerous road to travel. Those who can afford to contribute to the running of this and other precious places for all, should be encouraged to do so.

Please help us to be proud of and strive to enjoy and thrive in the place where we live.

INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION 2

I was alarmed to read the proposal to close Wallasey and Birkenhead Central library and move the facility into a council building. In my opinion this move would be short sighted and mishandling of public property. A library is a multi communication hub plus a warm place for the lonely and isolated. Not everyone has the luxury of computer facilities or even a warm place to live. As a Wallasey resident we have seen so much of our heritage lost to cuts. To close the Wallasey and Birkenhead central library would be a travesty, another beautiful building lost and a further facility lost to the people of Wallasey. A library space in a Council building is no replacement for a library building. Education and information should be accessible to everyone of all backgrounds , age and means. When I was a teenager living in a crowded home I did my homework in the library. I am sure many youngsters of a similar background would benefit greatly if the facility was more widely promoted. Rather than reducing the service schools and the library service should be telling people what is available. The library is a window into further education, a tool to bring further education to those groups of people who would feel this opportunity is beyond their horizon a chance to level up society. We should be investing not reducing the service.

Personally I am a regular visitor to the library and I saw first hand how the service was disrupted for too long during Covid . Please do use the fallout of Covid and the mishandling of access as an excuse to reduce a valuable service to local residents.

INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATION 3

I am a professional genealogist and have regular need to use the local history resources at both Wallasey Central Library and Birkenhead Central Library. In an age when many genealogical and local history datasets are online, these two libraries hold material which is not. Wallasey, for example, holds electoral rolls, local newspapers and tombstone inscriptions, as well as other items of local archive interest, such as corporation minute books. I have used all these sources in the tracing of family histories and house histories, and in reuniting families, and have been filmed for TV doing so. Birkenhead, meanwhile, holds electoral rolls for many of the towns and villages at the north end of the peninsula, amongst other material. I am very concerned that these sources will be lost to public access if these two libraries are closed and I know my concerns are shared by other local historians and researchers, amateurs and professionals alike.

For a number of years, the large national and international genealogy websites have been racing each other to acquire new datasets. The two main providers in the UK are Ancestry and FindMyPast, although there are others. By "acquire", I mean pay local authorities to digitise their material and place it online for general searching. Ancestry, for example, has digitised Liverpool's electoral rolls up to 1970, while FindMyPast runs the British Newspaper Archive, which digitises local newspapers, including the Liverpool Echo & the Mercury. I would suggest that you ask Liverpool Record Office about the process they went through with both firms to have their collections digitised, and how much income it accrued for the local authority. If repeated for Wallasey and Birkenhead, this process should salvage the data held at the two libraries & make it accessible to many more people, and in perpetuity, whilst also bringing in some income.

There are, though, datasets which neither Ancestry nor FindMyPast would digitise, such as the corporation minute books. You might consider relocating these to Wirral Archives - they are local & presumably have enough physical space. This could also be the home for the physical volumes which are digitised, plus the later electoral rolls (e.g. from 1970-2000) which would not be digitised. What is important is to retain public access to all these sources and, whilst it is wonderful to house them in beautiful old buildings, it does seem that the world no longer has money to spend on culture and learning, only on basic day-to-day survival. It is a sad state of affairs - a retrograde step for human society - but it is what it is. You will find less opposition to your proposals to close the libraries if you can guarantee the survival and, most importantly, accessibility of the material elsewhere locally and/or online.

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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 2 February 2023

REPORT TITLE:	TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE WORK PROGRAMME
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

It is envisaged that the work programme will be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. This report provides the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee is recommended to note and comment on the proposed Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure Members of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee have the opportunity to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 A number of workplan formats were explored, with the current framework open to amendment to match the requirements of the Committee.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 3.1 The work programme should align with the priorities of the Council and its partners. The programme will be informed by:

- The Council Plan
- The Council's transformation programme
- The Council's Forward Plan
- Service performance information
- Risk management information
- Public or service user feedback
- Referrals from Council

Terms of Reference

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement. The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

(a) for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services

(b) community engagement, incorporating the Council's approach to equalities, inclusion communities, neighbourhoods and the voluntary and charitable sector, community wealth building and social value;

(c) in considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;

(d) for the provision and management of leisure, sports and recreation facilities;

(e) for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's

(f) concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events;

(g) in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service;

(h) regarding community safety, crime and disorder and all associated matters;

(i) for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:

(i) consumer protection;

(ii) product safety;

(iii) fair trading;

(iv) metrology;

(v) food standards and animal health;

(vi) air pollution control;

(vii) health and safety at work (except in so far as it relates to the Council as an employer);

(viii) public conveniences

food safety; and

(x) control of nuisances;

(j) in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (community, regulatory and asset services);

(k) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and

(l) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.

(m) in respect of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the functions to:

(i) review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions; and

(ii) make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions

Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee's role includes an overview scrutiny approach to its responsibilities which shall be conducted in accordance with the overview and scrutiny means of working set out at Part 4(4)(B) of this Constitution. As part of its work programming the Committee shall consider:

(a) Overview and Policy Development -The Committee may undertake enquiries and investigate the available options for future direction in policy development and may appoint

advisors and assessors to assist them in this process. They may go on site visits, conduct public surveys, hold public meetings, commission research and do all other things that they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny – The Committee holds responsibility:

(i) for scrutinising and reviewing decisions made or actions taken by the Authority in so far as they have an impact on the role or functions of the Committee, its policies, budget and service delivery;

(ii) for the overview and scrutiny of external organisations whose services or activities affect the Borough of Wirral or any of its inhabitants where this does not fall within the role or remit of another service Committee or where it relates to cross cutting issues; and

(iii) for those overview and scrutiny functions in respect of crime and disorder as set out in paragraph 6.4(m) above which are to include the establishment and

functioning of joint arrangements as set out at paragraph 15 of this Section

Stakeholder Engagement - The Committee may invite stakeholders to address the committee on issues of local concern and/or answer questions in so far as it impacts directly or indirectly on the role of functions of the committee.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This report is for information and planning purposes only, therefore there are no direct financial implication arising. However, there may be financial implications arising as a result of work programme items.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, there may be legal implications arising as a result of work programme items.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct implications to Staffing, ICT or Assets.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Committee's ability to undertake its responsibility to provide strategic direction to the operation of the Council, make decisions on policies, co-ordinate spend, and maintain a strategic overview of outcomes, performance, risk management and budgets may be compromised if it does not have the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.

This report is for information to Members and there are no direct equality implications.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct environment and climate implications.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 This report is for information to Members and there are no direct community wealth implications.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Tourism Communities Culture and Leisure Committee Work Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council Constitution
Forward Plan
The Council's transformation programme

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Tourism Communities Culture and Leisure Committee	26 October 2020
	23 November 2020
	21 January 2021
	3 March 2021
	16 June 2021
	27 July 2021
	2 September 2021

	12 October 2021 17 November 2021 14 December 2021 18 January 2022 8 March 2022 16 June 2022
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TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Contact Officer/s: POLLY PRICE

March Agenda

Item	Key Decision	Lead Officer
Wirral Tram Museum	Yes	Cathy Palmer
Heritage and Conservation Strategy	Yes	Jane Morgan
Customer Experience Strategy	No	Nicki Butterworth/Andy McCartan
VCF and Community Cohesion	No	Mark Cambourne
Community Safety	No	Mark Cambourne
Work Programme Update	No	Polly Price

UPCOMING KEY DECISIONS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Lead Departmental Officer	Wirral Plan Priority
Sport & Physical Activity Strategy Update (suggested July 23)	Andy McCartan	Healthy and Active lives
	Andy McCartan	Healthy and Active lives

Library Strategy & New Model (Update) Suggested June 23		
Facilities Investment Strategy Suggested October 2023 however could do with a workshop in July 23)	Andy McCartan	Health and Active lives
Borough of Culture 2024 Planning and Governance	Sally Shah	Healthy and Active Lives

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS – WAITING TO BE SCHEDULED

Item	Approximate timescale	Lead Departmental Officer
Battle of Brunanburh	TBC	Keith Keeley
Thornton Hough Public Convenience	TBC	David Ball?
Bromborough Civic Centre and Library	TBC	David Ball?
Open Golf	TBC	Mark Camborne
Update on Customer and Community Contact (Revenue and Benefit)	TBC	Andy McCartan

STANDING ITEMS AND MONITORING REPORTS

Item	Reporting Frequency	Lead Departmental Officer
Financial Monitoring	Quarterly	Shaer Halewood
Performance reports	6 monthly	Nancy Clarkson

WORK PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE COMMITTEE

Item	Format	Timescale	Lead Officer	Progress

Spotlight sessions / workshops				
Community Asset Transfer Workshops	Workshop	2021	David Ball	Ongoing
Budget Setting	Workshops	2022	All	Ongoing
Performance Dashboard	Workshop	2023	Nicki Butterworth/ Nancy Clarkson	Completed
Corporate scrutiny / Other				
Risk	Workshop	TBC	Nicki Butterworth	

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Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee – Terms of Reference

The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee has responsibility for customer contact, community development and community services, including all of those functions related to community safety and also those regarding the promotion of community engagement.

The Committee is charged by full Council to undertake responsibility for the Council's role and functions:-

- (a) for customer and community contact services, including various offices and meeting points, customer contact centres and advice and transaction services
- (b) community engagement, incorporating the Council's approach to equalities, inclusion communities, neighbourhoods and the voluntary and charitable sector, community wealth building and social value;
- (c) in considering options and develop proposals for neighbourhood arrangements, including capacity building, use of assets and devolving powers and services to neighbourhoods;
- (d) for the provision and management of leisure, sports and recreation facilities;
- (e) for delivery of the authority's library and museums services, including but not limited to art galleries, historic buildings and their gardens and the functions of the Council regarding public records, and the Council's
- (f) concerning tourism, the arts, culture and heritage, including provision of theatre, entertainments, conferences and events;
- (g) in relation to bereavement services and support to the Coroner's service;
- (h) regarding community safety, crime and disorder and all associated matters;
- (i) for trading standards and environmental health, including but not limited to:
 - (i) consumer protection;
 - (ii) product safety;
 - (iii) fair trading;
 - (iv) metrology;
 - (v) food standards and animal health;
 - (vi) air pollution control;
 - (vii) health and safety at work (except in so far as it relates to the Council as an employer);
 - (viii) public conveniences;
 - (ix) food safety; and
 - (x) control of nuisances;
- (j) in respect of emergency planning and community resilience (community, regulatory and asset services);
- (k) providing a view of performance, budget monitoring and risk management in relation to the Committee's functions; and
- (l) undertaking the development and implementation of policy in relation to the Committee's functions, incorporating the assessment of outcomes, review of effectiveness and formulation of recommendations to the Council, partners and other bodies, which shall include any decision relating to the above functions.
- m) in respect of the Police and Justice Act 2006, the functions to:

- (i) review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions; and
- (ii) make reports or recommendations to the local authority with respect to the discharge of those functions