

CABINET

Tuesday, 21 February 2012

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

311 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

312 URGENT BUSINESS

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

313 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

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

314 DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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

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

RESOLVED:

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Budget proposals agreed by the Cabinet, under urgent business, at its Special meeting held on 13 February 2012 be rescinded (Minute

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

316 **SCHOOLS' BUDGET 2012/13**

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

RESOLVED taking account of the Schools Forum: That

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

317 **COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/2013**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cutting the cost of Council administration

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

By taking the difficult decisions necessary in our last budget we have ensured that further staff reductions are not required. This enables us to redirect staffing levels to the front line services that serve the public, keep young people and vulnerable adults safe.

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

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

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

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

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

Your FAMILY: Services for Children and Young People

In last year's budget we stated:

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

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

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

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

We believe that as a Council we have no more important duty than to protect the lives of vulnerable children and the £1 million we are announcing today will fund into a range of measures for 2012/13 to keep Wirral children safe and enhance our front

line children's services. This will include the crucial role School's play as part of the 'team around the child'. A new pilot to employ an experienced social worker to work with a cluster of schools to ensure intervention takes place at the earliest stage possible.

Caring for our most vulnerable children

- We are committed to tackling inter generational child poverty in Wirral, and congratulate the 'Roots and Wings' group for the work they have completed to develop our strategy. We will now make a significant investment to deliver on this work.
- We believe that the Roots & Wings group made up, as it is, of Voluntary, Community and Faith Group representatives is best placed to determine and prioritise where investments should be made to best effect in local communities. **£ 400, 000**
- To ensure support is targeted towards children requiring extra help we will work with Frank Field MP and Cambridge University to ensure accurate information is available allowing resources to be prioritised on those most in need via a better understanding of 'school readiness' **£100,000**
- We will continue our successful investment into every Sure Start Centre that enables our dedicated staff to offer even more opportunities for the children and families they serve for a second year. This will include an additional £2,000 grant for every Centre in 2012/13 to buy new equipment and offer families the opportunity to enjoy day trips and outings. **£38,000**
- Residents who provide foster care opportunities for children to be brought up in a safe and caring environment deserve all the support we can provide. We are therefore ensuring that foster care allowances are increased in line with national recommendations. **£160, 000**
- We particularly welcome the Governments recommendation that the friends and family who step in to foster a child in need should also receive assistance. **£450,000**
- Wirral Council is the 'parent' to around 680 Looked After Children who are in our care. Many receive valuable support and assistance from their peers on the Children in Care Council. We congratulate them for the work they have undertaken this year utilizing last years budget provision and award them a further grant to continue this activity. **£20,000**
- We will encourage Voluntary, Community and Faith sector organisations to provide placements for 100 young people who are not in employment, education or training. This will provide valuable experience, raise confidence and work readiness with the longer term aim of gaining employment. **£220, 000**

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

£50,000

Your FAMILY: Adult Social Services

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

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

Keeping people in good health

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

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

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

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

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

Your NEIGHBOURHOOD

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

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

Investing in the people's priorities

In addition to the budget provision made last year:

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

£5,000 per forum

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

- We will reappoint a 'Libraries Champion' to work with the Reader Organisation (chaired by Sue Charteris) to oversee work on a new library model based on delivering soft social care, education and community development. This will be carried out in partnership with the Director of Public Health and piloted at one library with the aim of replicating it across the entire library network.
- In addition we will ensure that the 'Get into reading' project continues through investing a further year's funding in this important project prioritising those who have mental health needs. **£100,000**
- The active and enthusiastic Allotment Associations around Wirral are an important part of our local neighbourhoods. We therefore make a further fund available this year to spend as they wish. **£ 50,000**

- We will make a further investment in our waste infrastructure while ensuring that that the review of the waste contract is prioritized to ensure maximum value for money. **£677, 000**

In addition:

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

Your ECONOMY

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

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

- We will invest in Wirral's Green economy through a pilot project to ensure local businesses benefit fully from the opportunities presented by this crucial sector, particularly those in local green sector businesses who are already grasping this opportunity. This will deliver extra training, up skilling, and apprentices to enable people moving into the sector, including the unemployed to access appropriate training opportunities in Wirral. There will also be a major marketing event to promote Wirral's green sector businesses and job opportunities. These budget recommendations have come forth from a detailed scrutiny review of the sector. **£500,000**
- Helping to ensure our local shopping areas remain vibrant is something we commenced last year through the introduction of an Empty Shops Fund,

alongside the 'free after three' and the 'big clean up' initiatives. This year, we want to build upon that and provide funds for local Trader groups to bid in to with suggestions of what they would propose to do to improve the vitality of their shopping areas. We would expect the bids that are supported to demonstrate how local trader groups will come together and contribute their time and/or resources to the bids successful outcome. This process will work alongside and compliment any successful bids into the Coalition Government's Mary Portas pilots. **£500,000**

- To encourage local people to shop in Wirral all car parking from Monday through to Friday will continue to be 'free after three' for another twelve months. **£400,000**
- Continuing to support local business to thrive and grow is vital in order to rebalance Wirral's economy. Over the last five years the Council has assisted in safeguarding and creating almost 6000 jobs and supported almost £100 million of private sector investment. We will continue to provide dedicated business support and advice to all who have the potential to grow, helping them to identify new business opportunities and access new markets.

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

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

£1.5 million

Investing in community assets

The New Brighton Development is becoming established as a key leisure asset for the local community and has potential to attract even more investment from the private sector. We will invest **£1.2 million** this year to enhance the quality of the environment around it, such as pavements, street lighting and car parking.

The Open Golf Championship attracted significant investment to Wirral and showcased what our beautiful peninsula has to offer. We will invest a further **£1.2**

million to ensure that Hoylake becomes a fantastic gateway for visitors including the creation of a new town square.

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

Your COUNCIL

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

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

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

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

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

We must also ensure that the wishes of Council Members are implemented properly and that performance management is given greater prominence than has hitherto been the case. We believe that Members must play a leadership role in this and so we are instructing the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to establish a new all Party Business Delivery Board to support the Cabinet by detailed oversight of progress on our Corporate Plan.

We will ensure this Council is in the future focussed upon serving and protecting local people In particular those who are most vulnerable and in need. This Council must

do this through the engagement and empowerment of individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services, and by working together with partners in the public, private and the community, voluntary and faith and independent sectors. We therefore instruct the Chief Executive to bring forward proposals to change the Council's Policy Framework to ensure that lawful consultation and engagement are central to all budget and decision making processes in the future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Wirral Services**Valuation Bands**

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

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

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

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

Fire**Valuation Bands**

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

Police**Valuation Bands**

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

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

Wirral Council**Valuation Bands**

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

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

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET PROPOSAL 21 FEBRUARY 2012

SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED:

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That

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

320 **BENEFITS BUDGET, PROVISION AND RESERVE**

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

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

RESOLVED: That

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

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

321 STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME

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

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

RESOLVED:

That the revised Strategic Change Programme be agreed.

322 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2012/2015

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

RESOLVED: That

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

323 BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED:

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

324 **CARBON BUDGET 2012/2013**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED:

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