

CABINET

Monday 23 February 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	J Green	Mrs LA Rennie

380 MINUTES

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management reported that none of the decisions from the previous meeting, held on 5 February, had been called in and those that were subject to Council had been confirmed.

Resolved – That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved and adopted.

381 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were asked to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any item on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and to state the nature of such interest. The following declarations were made:

Councillors George Davies, McLaughlin and Stapleton – a personal interest in minute 382 below by virtue of being governors of schools affected by the revised policy for school crossing patrols.

In addition, those Cabinet members who served as school governors declared a personal interest in minute 385 (Schools Budget).

382 PROVISION OF SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS - POLICY REVIEW

Further to the motion approved by the Council on 15 December 2008 (minute 89 refers), the Director of Technical Services reported on the criteria for a proposed new policy for determining the need for the provision of school crossing patrols. The new policy would mean that seven of the 18 school crossing patrol sites planned for dis-establishment on 1 April 2009 would be retained. It also meant that the remaining sites in the list (Appendix A to the report) would cease to have a crossing patrol. He was satisfied, however, that the new policy was transparent and inclusive and provided a basis for a rolling programme of evaluation.

With regard to the petitions received, the aims of five had been satisfied and two (of a general nature) satisfied in part. The remaining petition related to a crossing (in New

Hey Road) that did not meet the criteria, but he was looking into the possibility of adding to the existing traffic calming measures.

In response to a query, he stated that there had been three fatalities in recent years (for 113 crossing sites), but none had involved children.

Resolved - That

- (1) the policy for the provision of school crossing patrols outlined in section 3.0 of the Director's report be approved;**
- (2) the continued provision of a school crossing patrol at the seven sites listed in paragraph 4.3 from 1 April 2009 be approved, on the basis that they comply with the new policy;**
- (3) an increase in the school crossing patrol revenue budget of £20,000 from 2009/10 onwards be approved to fund the reinstatement of those seven sites;**
- (4) the continued provision of a school crossing patrol at the Houghton Road/Glebe Hey Road site for the final summer term (before the closure of Arrowe Hill Primary School) be approved, as suggested in paragraph 4.5;**
- (5) the various petitions referred to in paragraph 5.1 and listed in Appendix B be noted, and the Director of Technical Services be instructed to write to all lead petitioners advising them of the outcome of this matter.**

383 CONSULTATION WITH NON-DOMESTIC RATEPAYERS

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management informed the Cabinet of the steps taken to consult non-domestic ratepayers about expenditure proposals for 2009/10. The Council was required to do so by Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. He stated that no responses had been received to a public advertisement and to letters sent to local bodies representing business interests.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

384 BUDGET 2009-10

The Director of Finance presented the draft revenue estimates for 2009/10. A decision was required to enable recommendations to be made to the Council concerning the budget and council tax for 2009/10. This involved a key decision on a matter forming part of the budget and policy framework and it had been included in the Forward Plan.

The Leader of the Council submitted and commented on a motion which set out the budget proposals of the joint administration. He stated that the council tax rise resulting from those proposals would be 4.42%, higher than he had hoped but the best that could be achieved in what had been a very difficult year. A great deal of effort had gone into bringing the budget down to an acceptable level, and the Strategic Asset Review had made a significant contribution (£3.1m) towards that. The increase might have been lower but for the fact that note had been taken that the

public of Wirral were prepared to accept a higher level of council tax in order to see a number of premises retained. Councillor Foulkes went on to describe the policy options shown in paragraphs (4) to (6) of his motion.

In seconding the motion and endorsing the Leader's remarks, the Deputy Leader of the Council described the policy options in paragraphs (7) to (9) and, on a more general point emphasised the amount of £37.4m that the current administration had saved in improved efficiencies.

The Leader of the Council concluded by thanking the officers for their contributions to the budget process and expressed the view that the hard work and difficult decisions over the previous year would put the Council in a stronger financial position for the forthcoming year

At the Leader's request, the Director of Finance reiterated his earlier remarks regarding the Council's investment with the Icelandic Bank. The view of the Administrator was that the Bank's assets exceeded its liabilities, so the Council would be reimbursed, albeit, as was expected, not until 2010.

Resolved -

(1) Delivering a Vision for Wirral

- **This is the second year of the Council's Corporate Plan and the new Vision for Wirral, accompanied by Wirral's Investment Strategy, which aims to create a more prosperous and equal Wirral, founded on a strong, vibrant local economy with high levels of employment.**
- **This budget also forms the third budget in a three-year Efficiency Plan, agreed by all parties, which set out to reduce the Council's spending commitments by thirty million pounds over a three-year period, a figure which later increased to meet additional financial difficulties experienced by the Council as demands for statutory services, and particularly Adult Social Services, increased.**
- **The Efficiency Plan was agreed in order to achieve a Council budget which would be sustainable for the long-term future and more resistant to the many pressures it was likely to encounter. Without this sustainable budget the Council would be struggling to deliver on the Vision it has set out.**
- **Over the three years the Council has, in fact, achieved efficiencies of £37.4 million. It has also successfully met Government efficiency targets, which are rigorously scrutinised.**
- **The decisions the Council has taken in order to do this have not been easy. They have challenged, and will continue to challenge, assumptions about the way the Council delivers services and the way in which it should invest in services for the future. This includes the radical changes being made in the way that Adult Social Services are delivered, giving individuals more choice and control over their own**

lives; the large scale transfer of community centres to community development trusts, who will both run and own the buildings themselves; the £20m investment in new neighbourhood centres which will bring together a variety of Council, community and other public sector services; and planned investment in new, 7-night-a-week, youth super centres designed to meet the needs of young people today. As part of giving individuals more choice, the Council has also included a new scheme whereby Area Forums could make decisions to buy additional Council services for their areas, according to local need, which has, amongst other things, created a further £100,000 of investment in youth sports and activities targeted to the need of local areas.

- We recognise that there has been considerable public resistance to some measures we have been required to take, because part of the price of preparing ourselves for the future has been the closure of some local facilities where there was over-provision in comparison with other authorities, where the strategic direction for the future has changed, or where we simply needed to cut back on the number of individual buildings we owned, even though individual services provided from these buildings were popular and of a very high standard.
- When we first started on this process there was no sign of a recession on the horizon. We were just doing what we could to create a sustainable budget for the future which would allow the Council to grow and develop to meet the changing needs of its residents. Now, more than ever, in the middle of a recession, with council income dropping, unemployment rising and local businesses under real threat, we need that sustainable budget in order to be able to do all we can to assist the people we were elected to serve.

These measures, and those outlined below, are part of the Strategic Objective to create an excellent council, meeting the agreed priorities for improvement of improving the use of the Council's land and assets, maintaining a stable and sustainable budget and improving the Council's budgeting process to fully reflect its priorities and the priority for improvement of promoting greater independence and choice under the Strategic Objective of improving health and well-being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society.

(2) Council Tax Levels

The proposed council tax increase for Wirral is 4.4%. Cabinet recognises that, after several years in which Wirral's council tax has been below the rate of inflation, this increase is higher than usual. However, it was made clear during the recent consultation on Wirral's Strategic Asset Review that residents of Wirral were prepared to pay a little more to retain some services they valued highly, particularly swimming and leisure facilities. Without the changes made to the original recommendations the increase in council tax would have been below 4%.

(3) Revenue Estimates

The revenue estimates for 2009/10, as set out in the Estimates Book now submitted, be approved subject to the amendments set out below.

(4) <u>Zero council tax increase for pensioner households over 75</u>	£
No pensioner household over 75 will pay any increase in Council Tax this year. This includes the consequences of any increases in Police and Fire precepts. This honours the target set (which is dependent on the Council's finances) to keep council tax increases for pensioner households over 75 at or beneath the level of the published inflation rate in the January Retail Price Index, which this year is just 0.1%.	190,000
<i>This is the equivalent of a 4.42% discount on their council tax bill.</i>	
(5) <u>Protecting Children and raising the aspirations of young people</u>	£
SCHOOLS Cabinet welcomes the fact, as outlined in the Schools Budget resolution, that an additional £4.4m has been allocated by the government for Wirral schools in 2009/10, and notes that this equates to an increase per pupil of 3.9%.	5,060,000
Cabinet re-affirms its commitment to Wirral schools by allocating over £660,000 of Area Based Grant resources to schools in 2009/10.	
<i>Cabinet recognises that this will help the Council meet one of its strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan to raise the aspirations of young people.</i>	
CHILD PROTECTION Following the tragic case of Baby P, Children's Services, in tandem with many other local authorities, have been conducting a detailed review of all their activity and identifying areas where improvement is needed to ensure that children in Wirral are fully protected and everything conceivable is done to prevent any child falling through the safety net provided by Children's Services in conjunction with other Child Protection Services.	690,000
Cabinet asks for a detailed report on this review to be brought to Cabinet on 19 March and, in the meantime, proposes an increase in resources of £690,000 as a growth item to help fund any improvements necessary.	
<i>This helps meet the Strategic Objective of raising the aspirations of young people.</i>	

<p>RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN Cabinet recognises the progress that has been made in finding alternatives to residential care wherever possible, and also recognises that in cases where very specialist alternatives are required the time to implement such measures may be longer than originally anticipated. Cabinet therefore agrees to a one-year bridging sum of £280,000, to be set against the previously agreed saving of £650,000 alongside any potential slippage in the first year from the full-year resources required as outlined above to improve child protection.</p>	<p>280,000</p>
<p><i>This helps meets the strategic Objective of raising the aspirations of young people.</i></p>	
<p>(6) <u>Investing in Wirral</u></p>	<p>£</p>
<p>Cabinet recognises that we are facing a severe recession and it is essential to do everything possible to protect local businesses and local jobs from the impact of the credit crunch and the downturn in the economy as well as playing our part in stimulating the local economy. Cabinet therefore proposes the following measures:</p>	
<p>TEN-DAY PAYMENT FOR SME CREDITORS Council will seek to improve the cash flow of local businesses by targeting payment of invoices within 10 days for all creditors from small- and medium-sized enterprises employing fewer than 250 people. A report on this is requested for Cabinet on 19 March.</p>	<p>170,000</p>
<p>SUPPORT FOR MICRO-BUSINESSES WITH TEN EMPLOYEES OR FEWER A grant fund of £50,000 for one year will be set up to give immediate support to previously successful micro-businesses employing ten or fewer employees who now face difficulties as a result of the credit crunch and to facilitate access to a much larger fund of £800,000 a year over two years, which would be paid for from Working Wirral funds. An urgent report on the setting up and operation of this larger fund is requested for Cabinet on 19 March.</p>	<p>50,000</p>
<p>USE OF THE COUNCIL'S MAJOR CAPITAL PROGRAMMES TO ASSIST THE LOCAL ECONOMY The Council is planning a major £20m capital investment in new and modernised buildings over the next four years and over £25m of government money is also about to be spent on the building of a brand new secondary school. Contractors will be asked wherever possible to employ a high percentage of local labour. Cabinet recognises that during the recent building of the Floral Pavilion 20% of those employed came from a Wirral post code, and 65% from a Merseyside post code. Cabinet will do everything possible to ensure this record is matched or exceeded.</p>	

<p>It is the Council's intention to make its new buildings as energy efficient as possible. Under the CRED carbon reduction scheme that the Council has signed up to, it has a duty to promote energy efficiency and where possible show the way with best practice. Every opportunity will be taken to allow local firms to showcase their wares through the Council's building programme.</p>	
<p>APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINING Details of a Construction Employment Integrator scheme are currently being drawn up which will bring together information on all construction projects on Wirral in the public and private sector. This will be used to create a variety of training and apprenticeship opportunities to continue across different schemes and allow access to new entrants to the construction industry while maintaining and improving its local skills base. A report is requested for Cabinet as soon as possible on this scheme, which will be funded through Working Wirral. Officers are also asked to explore the possibilities for wider apprenticeship schemes across the public and private sector similar to the Knowsley Apprentice scheme.</p>	
<p>INVESTIGATION OF THE POTENTIAL FOR A MUNICIPAL BANK The Director of Finance is asked to actively investigate the potential for setting up a Municipal Bank either in conjunction with other Merseyside authorities or separately, which would serve the function of assisting local businesses with loans in a situation where commercial banks are holding onto their own assets against future liabilities rather than lending to the business community. The concept of the Municipal Bank is already being explored by other local authorities and could also serve the function of assisting domestic clients with mortgages where the supply has dried up and where it may be in the interests of the local authority to encourage the use of housing which may not be attractive to commercial lenders.</p>	
<p><i>The above items under Investing in Wirral help meet the Strategic Objective to create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral with the priorities for improvement of reducing worklessness and increasing enterprise and the aim to increase employment opportunities and match skills to employers' demands.. It also meets the Strategic Objective to create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment, with the priority for improvement of reducing the Council's carbon footprint.</i></p>	
<p>(7) <u>Increased choice for local people</u></p>	<p>£</p>
<p>YOU DECIDE A pilot scheme allowing Area Forums to buy in additional council services for their areas was carried out last year. It resulted in over £100,000 of additional funds being allocated on sports and youth activity, including diversionary activity to improve community safety, over £50,000 of additional money on cleaning</p>	<p>260,000</p>

<p>up the environment, over £25,000 on other ways of improving levels of community safety and crime prevention, and a variety of small amounts on individual environmental improvements, road signing and educational initiatives. A full evaluation of the scheme will be presented to the Cabinet on 19 March. In the meantime, provision will be maintained at £260,000, which is £20,000 per Area Forum with the continuation of an additional £20,000 each for the Youth Parliament and the Older People's Parliament.</p>	
<p>CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE COMMUNITY Cabinet recognises that there is a major transfer of assets to the community taking place and considerable advice, assistance and shared knowledge will be needed to engage the community in this process and empower them to own and run their own facilities in the best interests of local people. Cabinet proposes that an additional sum of £50,000 be made available in the base budget to help in this process.</p>	50,000
<p>Cabinet further recognises that a detailed review of the community engagement and development functions within the Council needs to be undertaken in the light of new legislation, developments, initiatives and funding regimes, in order to ensure that all activities are properly focused and complement each other, and asks for an urgent report on this to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.</p>	
<p><i>The items above meet the aims under the Create an Excellent Council Objective of improving accountability, accessibility and openness and involving those who use our services in their design and delivery as well as improving partnership working with the public, private and voluntary sectors. The individual amounts spent by Area Forums also add to the Strategic Objective of creating a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment as well as raising the aspirations of young people.</i></p>	
<p><u>(8) Provision for increase in energy costs on Street Lighting contract</u></p>	£
<p>Cabinet proposes that the sum of £180,000 be included in the base budget as a growth item and contribution to the anticipated increase in energy costs for Wirral's street lighting, taking into account previously agreed efficiency measures.</p>	180,000
<p><u>(9) School Crossing Patrols</u></p>	£
<p>Cabinet proposes that the recommendations in the report to the Cabinet (see minute 382 above) be accepted and that the cost of £20,000 be included in the base budget. Cabinet notes that this will allow crossing patrol attendants to be moved from lower risk crossings to staff higher risk crossings, some of which are</p>	20,000

currently unstaffed because of the difficulties in filling vacant posts.	
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(10) That 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.

(11) That the appropriate officers be instructed to issue to Wirral residents factual publicity about agreed policy options.

(12) That for the financial year 2009/10 the Council will offer a discount on council tax to ensure that no pensioner household over 75 will pay any increase in council tax, including the consequences of any Police and Fire increases. This will apply where:

(i) the council tax payer pays council tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for council tax purposes are aged 75 or over on 1 April 2009 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2009 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);

(ii) all such individuals are not in receipt of council tax benefit and application is made for the discount.

This discount will be calculated after deduction of all other council tax discounts and reliefs.

(13) It be noted that, at its meeting on 15 December 2008, the Council calculated the figure of 104,276.0 as its council tax base for the year 2009/10 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, made under Section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(14) That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2009/10 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (the Act) and the Collection Fund (Council Tax Benefit) (England) Direction 2002:

- (a) £792,091,900 being the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (c) of the Act;
- (b) £511,033,400 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act;
- (c) £281,058,500 being the amount by which the aggregate at 14(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 14(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;
- (d) £152,050,000 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant,

adjusted for the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year between its Collection Fund and its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and any amount which the Council estimates to be transferred between its Collection Fund and its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) Directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, issued on 7 February 1994;

(e) £1,237.18

being the total amount at 14(c) above less the amount at 14(d) above, divided by the amount at 13 above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;

(f) Valuation Bands:

A	£824.79	B	£962.25	C	£1,099.72	D	£1,237.18
E	£1,512.11	F	£1,787.04	G	£2,061.97	H	£2,474.36

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 14(e) above 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.

(15) It be noted that this equates to a Wirral council tax rise of 4.43%.

(16) It be noted that for the year 2009/10 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

A	£41.47	B	£48.39	C	£55.30	D	£62.21
E	£76.03	F	£89.86	G	£103.68	H	£124.42

Police

A	£93.50	B	£109.08	C	£124.67	D	£140.25
E	£171.42	F	£202.58	G	£233.75	H	£280.50

(17) Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at paragraphs (14) and (16) above, 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 2009/10 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:

Valuation Bands

A	£959.76	B	£1,119.72	C	£1,279.68	D	£1,439.64
E	£1,759.56	F	£2,079.48	G	£2,399.40	H	£2,879.28

(18) It be noted that this equates to an overall increase in council tax of 4.42%.

385 **SCHOOLS BUDGET**

The Director of Children's Services presented a report which recommended the approval of the Schools Budget for the year 2009/10. He explained that it was the second year of a national three-year funding period for schools (2008-2011). In 2008/09 decisions had been taken about levels of funding based on the government's stated priorities. The budget had been presented to the Wirral Schools Forum on 21 January 2009: The Forum had supported the overall budget and proposed variations, including a revised arrangement for dealing with excess school balances and the transferring of insurance costs to individual school budgets.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning moved a recommendation, duly seconded, and explained the detail behind each of the recommendations, in particular the fact that they would help to maintain and improve further the high levels of attainment among Wirral pupils.

Resolved -

(1) Cabinet welcomes the increase in funding from Government through Dedicated Schools Grant of £4.4m for 2009/10 and £5.9m for 2010/11. This amounts to over £10m more for Wirral schools over the next two years.

(2) Cabinet recommends to Council that the Schools Budget for 2009/10 be set at the level of the adjusted Dedicated Schools Grant which is £188,136,200. This equates to an increase of 3.9% per pupil.

(3) Cabinet notes that for 2010/11, the adjusted Dedicated Schools Grant will be £194,121,000, which equates to an increase of 4.4% per pupil.

(4) It is acknowledged that these increases are above the current CPI rate of inflation and that they compare favourably with the average national increases per pupil in 2009/10 of 3.7% and 2010/11 of 4.3%.

(5) Cabinet recognises that this budget will help the Council to achieve one of the strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan, which is to raise the aspirations of young people. This funding will also contribute towards the four themes in the Children and Young People's Plan:

- Reducing health inequalities for children and young people

- Intervening and supporting children earlier and in their communities
- Reducing the gap in outcomes for children
- Improving value for money in services

(6) Cabinet notes that the increase in funding per pupil of 3.9% in 2009/10 includes the following spending assessment by the Government: Minimum Funding Guarantee (2.1%) and Government priorities (0.8%).

(7) Cabinet notes that the Government has set the Minimum Funding Guarantee at 2.1% for the period 2008-2011. This is 1% below the assessment of average cost pressures and assumes an efficiency gain in schools, as part of national public sector efficiency requirements.

(8) The projected budget of 2009-2011 includes the following items (for detail see Appendix 1 of the Director's report):

Inflation

Provision is included for teachers and other pay at 2% and income at 3%. Provision has also been included for price inflation at 2%.

Headroom

Headroom is the difference between the DSG and the budget required to continue funding schools at their current level, after allowing for inflation, unavoidable cost pressures and the Minimum Funding Guarantee. Cabinet notes the decision taken in 2008/09 about Headroom in 2009/10. This is allocated as follows:

Deprivation funding to "narrow the gap"	£1,933,000
Secondary Education Inclusion Bases	£75,000
Increase in Statement value	£170,000

Other Specific Grants

Specific grants have been included in the budget and are detailed in the table below:

	Amount 2008/09	Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11
	£	£	£
LSC 6 th Form and SEN	20,341,400	20,767,100	21,201,600
School Development Grant:			
- Devolved	15,129,900	15,142,500	15,200,700
- Central	1,165,100	1,189,500	1,218,500
Schools Standards Grant	10,516,300	10,568,600	10,681,200
Learnwise – LSC/ESF	491,000	1,470,000	827,000
School Lunch Grant	554,700	553,300	553,300
Ethnic Minority Achievement	159,600	188,200	199,800
Extended School Sustainability	470,700	849,500	1,196,900
Targeted Primary and Secondary Strategy	2,176,200	1,911,100	TBA
Making Good Progress*	-	791,600	TBA

Surestart, Early Years and Childcare	9,101,000	9,562,000	10,385,000
Free entitlement for 3- and 4-year-olds	-	404,300	1,651,900
Playing for Success	80,000	80,000	80,000

* Making Good Progress is a new programme aimed at improving the rate at which pupils' progress year on year and includes funding for one-to-one tuition for children who have fallen behind expectations.

Area Based Grant

The following Area based Grants are also included in the Schools Budget:

	Amount 2008/09	Estimate 2009/10	Estimate 2010/11
	£	£	£
Secondary behaviour and Attendance	68,300	68,300	68,300
School Development Grant	776,600	444,700	444,700
Choice Advisors	52,100	52,100	52,100
Flexible 14-19 Partnerships	100,000	98,600	96,900
Total	997,000	663,700	662,000

Early Years

The number of children in Early Years settings has increased and Cabinet agrees to allocate growth of £134,000 to meet this requirement.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Cabinet notes the continuing pressures on SEN budgets and that this is mainly due to costs charged by other local authorities for SEN placements outside Wirral. Cabinet recommends that Council sets spending targets that will limit the increase required in 2009/10 to £250,000. This will be met from a reduction in the SEN Plan budget (£150,000), a reduction in Schools Contingency (£100,000) and reduced pressure on independent special school budgets, following changes to school places to be implemented at Claremount School in September 2009 and 2010.

Insurance

Cabinet agrees to carry forward, if available, into 2010/11 a schools contingency underspending of up to £200,000 to meet part of the increase in school insurance costs as set out in paragraph 4.9 of the report presented to the Schools Forum on 21 January.

(9) Increase in places at the Observatory School

The Observatory school provides places for secondary age pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD). Cabinet agrees to increase places from 40 to 50 with effect from September 2009, as part of the successful strategy to reduce the number of placements in out-of-borough schools.

(10) This Schools Budget reflects the advice and recommendations of the Schools Forum, from its meeting on 21 January 2009.

(11) Cabinet notes the full details of the budget breakdown and recommendations contained within the report and appendices of the Director of Children's Services, which have been presented to this meeting.

(12) Cabinet therefore endorses the Schools Budget for 2009/10 as set out above and recommends it to the Council for approval.

386 **BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE**

The Director of Law, H.R. and Asset Management reported, in accordance with Standing Order 13, on a proposed procedure for the Budget meeting of the Council.

Resolved – That the Budget Council procedure, set out in the appendix to the Director's report, be recommended to the Council, but that the deadline for the submission of alternative budget proposals be extended to 10.00am on Thursday 26 February.