

COUNCIL

Thursday, 1 March 2012

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Moira McLaughlin) in the Chair
Deputy Mayor (Councillor Gerry Ellis)

Councillors	RL Abbey	T Harney	D Realey
	T Anderson	P Hayes	L Rennie
	C Blakeley	A Hodson	D Roberts
	E Boulton	M Hornby	L Rowlands
	A Bridson	P Johnson	J Salter
	A Brighthouse	M Johnston	H Smith
	S Clarke	AER Jones	T Smith
	W Clements	C Jones	W Smith
	A Cox	P Kearney	J Stapleton
	J Crabtree	J Keeley	A Sykes
	G Davies	S Kelly	S Taylor
	P Davies	B Kenny	J Walsh
	WJ Davies	I Lewis	G Watt
	D Dodd	A McArdle	S Whittingham
	P Doughty	D McCubbin	R Wilkins
	D Elderton	AR McLachlan	I Williams
	S Foulkes	C Meaden	KJ Williams
	P Gilchrist	D Mitchell	P Williams
	P Glasman	B Mooney	S Williams
	JE Green	S Mountney	K Wood
	P Hackett	S Niblock	
	J Hale	C Povall	

Prior to the Mayor formally opening the meeting, she invited the Bishop of Birkenhead, Keith Sinclair, to lead the Council in prayers.

127 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

The following Members declared their personal interest in agenda item 6 – Council Budget 2012/2013 (see minute 133 post) for the reasons stated –

Councillors G Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, D Dodd, S Foulkes, P Glasman, P Hackett, C Jones, BM Kenny, A McArdle, ARC McLachlan, M McLaughlin, B Mooney, D Realey, H Smith, JV Stapleton, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, and KJ Williams by virtue of their membership of trades unions.

Councillors RL Abbey and J Salter by virtue of their membership of trades unions and also by virtue of their membership of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority.

Councillor C Blakeley by virtue of his membership of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority.

Councillors A Bridson, D Elderton, GJ Ellis, T Harney, D McCubbin and Mrs P Williams by virtue of their age.

Councillors W Clement and S Taylor by virtue of their employment.

Councillor J Crabtree by virtue of his membership of a trade union and also by virtue of him being a foster carer and a provider of training.

Councillor P Doughty by virtue of his membership of a trade union and also by virtue of him being a recruiter of staff under ILM.

Councillor JE Green by virtue of his membership of a trade union and also by virtue of his wife's employment as a teacher with the authority.

Councillor M Johnston by virtue of his wife's employment.

Councillors A Jones and W Smith by virtue of their membership of trades unions and also by virtue of their age.

Councillors Lewis and Rennie by virtue of their membership of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor C Meaden by virtue of her membership of a trade union and also by virtue of her daughter's employment within CYPD.

Councillors S Niblock and DE Roberts by virtue of their membership of trades unions and also by virtue of their membership of the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor SL Rowlands by virtue of his membership of a trade union, his wife's employment and him being a member of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority.

Councillor PA Smith by virtue of his membership of a trade union and also by virtue of his membership of the Merseyside Police Authority.

Councillor Mrs K Wood by virtue of her age and also by virtue of her being a member of the Merseyside Police Authority.

128 **PETITIONS**

In accordance with Standing Order 21, the Mayor received petitions submitted by –

Councillor J Keeley, on behalf of 13 signatories requesting the Council to include Maldwyn Street in the Liscard Area Residents Parking Scheme.

Councillor J Keeley, on behalf of 12 signatories requesting the Council to install alleygates at Scott Street, Liscard.

Councillor J Salter, on behalf of 124 signatories, requesting the Council to provide men's and women's public lavatories and baby changing facilities in Central Park Visitors Centre.

Councillor P Glasman submitted an additional 196 signatures to be added to the 2457 signatories opposing the plans to merge and move services between the Countess of Chester and Arrowe Park Hospitals, which was presented at the last meeting (minute 107 (13 February 2012) refers).and was to be debated at the next ordinary Council meeting to be held on 16 April, 2012 in accordance with Standing Order 34(1).

Resolved – That the petitions be noted and referred to the appropriate chief officer in accordance with Standing Order 34.

129 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13 February and the reconvened meeting held on 20 February 2012, had been circulated to members and it was –

Resolved – That the minutes be approved and adopted as a correct record.

130 MATTERS FOR NOTING

Moved by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

The Budget Council Procedure approved by the Cabinet at the Budget Meeting held on 21 February 2012 (minute 323 refers).

Amendment to Budget Council Procedure

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes
Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

Council notes that:

- A budget proposal was voted on unanimously by ten Cabinet members on February 13th and constitutionally referred to Budget Council on March 1st.
- Following a change of administration the same proposal was revoked by Cabinet on February 21st and an alternative proposal put forward with just four votes in favour.
- In order for the original proposal to be heard, even though it was constitutionally referred direct to Budget Council, the Monitoring Officer has ruled that it has to be re-submitted as an amendment to the second budget proposal.
- This relegation to the status of an amendment then allows the budget procedure agreed by Cabinet on February 21st to treat the Conservative proposal put forward at Cabinet on February 21st as the standing minute which will not require a vote if the amendments fall.

- This is despite the fact that the Conservatives are not the largest party, and could be outvoted by the largest party if the Liberal Democrats continued their policy of abstention.

Council does not believe this budget procedure was designed to deal with a situation where there are two formal and legal budgets, both constitutionally referred to Budget Council by a properly constituted Cabinet.

It therefore withdraws this procedure in favour of a vote to be taken on each budget with the budget remaining after others have fallen also subject to the confirmation of a majority vote.

Following a debate and Councillor Green having replied, the amendment proposed by Councillor Foulkes was put and lost (29:36) (One abstention).

Resolved (36:29) (one abstention) – That the Budget Council Procedure agreed by the Cabinet on 21 February 2012 (minute 323 refers) be confirmed.

131 COUNCIL BUDGET 2012/13

In accordance with Standing Order 13 (Budget Council Procedure), Councillor Jeff Green, Leader of the Council, moved the Cabinet's budget recommendations duly seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie, Deputy Leader, with any additional paragraphs (those relating to precepts) and any other minutes from the Cabinet meeting on 21 February, 2012 that required approval by the Council. The following minutes were deemed to be approved, subject to consideration of Budget amendments.

1. Minute 317 (Cabinet – 21 February 2012) Council Budget 2012/2013

Resolved – That:

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 principal 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 years 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 & 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 I for adults with learning disabilities. **£170,000**
- We will invest to improve the range and quality of our Adult Social Services. **£1.5million**
- 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 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 Government's 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 Governments 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 years 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 & 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	£117.15	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.24

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	£1,144.25	C	£1,307.72	D	£1,471.18
E	£1,798.11	F	£2,125.04	G	£2,451.97	H	£2,942.36

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

2. Minute 316 (Cabinet 21 February 2012) Schools Budget 2012/2013

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.

3. Minute 324 (Cabinet – 21 February 2012) Carbon Budget 2012/2013

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.
- (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.

4. Minute 322 (Cabinet – 21 February 2012) Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2012/2013

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.
- (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.

With the permission of the Council, the Leader reserved part of the time for speaking, allocated to him under Standing Order 5 (2) (h), to his right of reply to the debate on the amendments to the Council's Budget.

Council noted that the Budget proposals and amendments had been referred to a Special Meeting of the Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee (minute 90 (28 February 2012) refers), which –

Resolved –

- (1) That having received the Cabinet resolution and alternative budgets tabled as part of the budget process, the Committee has considered the financial pressures and threats and recognises that a number of significant changes to local government finance are in hand.
- (2) That Committee considers it essential that monitoring of the budget is rigorous, that potential overspends are identified and that Cabinet pays due regard to the implementation of policy options, and that any Efficiency Investment Budget allocation is used to maximum effect.

In accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Director of Finance submitted a written report in respect of the budget recommended by the Cabinet, which examined the robustness of the proposed budget with particular reference to:

- (a) the adequacy of General Fund balances and reserves;
- (b) the achievability of any savings included in the budget;
- (c) the impact of the proposed budget for 2012-13 on the setting of the budget for 2013-14.

He submitted also similar reports in respect of the Labour Group Budget Amendment and the Liberal Democrat Budget Amendments set out below.

LABOUR AMENDMENT TO BUDGET CABINET MINUTE 317

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes
Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

This Budget, proposed unanimously by all ten Cabinet members on February 13th, deletes and replaces the Conservative Budget scabbled together in less than a fortnight and proposed at Cabinet on February 21st by just four votes.

It has been amended only to include the precepts and to fulfil the pledge in the original budget to meet the cost of those precepts and set an overall Zero Council Tax increase, and to clarify one or two items which were already in the budget.

In so doing, it cuts Wirral's Council Tax by 0.6%.

This budget remains unamended because we firmly believe that this is the right budget for Wirral. It is a well planned and carefully thought out budget, without

gimmicks, which prepares the Council for future challenges and provides the resources necessary to see it through the rough times ahead and make a positive difference to Wirral residents.

1. Building hope for the future

A budget to tackle poverty and improve the life chances of Wirral residents.

This has been a turbulent year for Wirral. We started with unprecedented financial cuts, announced by government very late in the day, and the loss of 1200 staff, a fifth of the Council's workforce. We have had to spend time stabilising and restructuring services to make sure they continue to be delivered with far fewer people available to do so. We have had to make up shortfalls in the 2011/12 budget as the consequences of some decisions became more apparent and we have had to work hard to contain potential overspends as Departments struggled to manage on the more limited resources available.

We have also had to face some unpalatable home truths about the culture of the Council and serious failings both in Corporate Governance and in the protection of vulnerable adults, for which there is no acceptable excuse. A further critical report from the District Auditor on the handling of a Highways contract is expected very shortly and, again, there will be serious lessons to be learnt.

In 2012 we face a review of Local Government Finance which may radically affect the resources available to Wirral in 2013, and this review will be taking place in the context that we are already projecting a £78m shortfall in resources for 2013-2015. In these circumstances it is vitally important that we do nothing that could damage the Council in the future and that the budget we set is a sustainable one with a sensible base expenditure that is adequate to provide good future services for the people of Wirral in the years ahead, so we do not add to the very difficult times ahead.

It is also important that we manage scarce resources wisely and to that end we are focussing on providing an evidence base for decisions we take and, where that does not exist, to ensuring that action is taken to collect the necessary evidence through pilot schemes or other methods.

We are looking to move towards the prevention of problems, rather than simply reacting to them at a later date when they are fully developed and we are investing in research which will help identify the best way of doing this in a number of areas.

It is also important that we take on board any criticisms that have been made, and take the opportunity of this budget to direct additional resources into areas that need them and which will strengthen the position of the Council in the future so past mistakes are not repeated.

At the heart of this budget is the need to tackle poverty and deprivation on Wirral. The Vision for Wirral set out in the original draft Corporate Plan is an ambitious vision which seeks to create a healthy and prosperous Wirral with a sense of well being that permeates all levels of our society.

Crucially, this Vision seeks to reduce dramatically the mortality gap which means that in the poorest areas of the borough you are likely to die ten years earlier

than your counterpart in the richest areas of the borough, and if you are a man up to fifteen years earlier. The move to locate Public Health in Local Authorities provides a very real opportunity to tackle this scandalous inequality.

This Budget will be supporting Wirral's Investment Strategy and investing money to provide more jobs in the borough, and help support the long term unemployed back into work.

It will be supporting Wirral's Child Poverty Action strategy, and it will focus on the early years of a child's life which evidence shows are crucial in determining whether or not the cycle of poverty and deprivation will be repeated.

It will be looking at additional ways to improve safeguarding for adults and children.

It will be looking at ways to increase the wellbeing of individuals and to make their neighbourhoods safer, cleaner and healthier.

It will be listening to what residents have said they want in their Neighbourhood Plans.

It will be taking account of the analysed response to the You Choose Budget Simulator, where residents had the opportunity to set their own budget, and where the number of responses received in Wirral topped the charts in the country, coming second only to the original pilot authority.

2. 0.6% cut in Wirral Council Tax levels. Overall Zero Increase in Council Tax Levels including precepts.

At a time when RPI inflation is running at 3.9%, the overall Council Tax, including precepts, will be set at a Zero Increase in recognition of the financial difficulties faced by many families in a time of recession. Residents have been clear in their responses that they do not want to see an increase in Council Tax at this time.

We have chosen to absorb the cost of the increase of the police and fire precept, in recognition of the importance to Wirral residents of proper levels of policing and of fire protection. These have been funded from balances which we previously left available for this purpose. The remainder has been absorbed by the increase in the Council's Tax Base in 2012/13.

This means that there is actually a cut in Wirral's Council Tax of 0.6%

Revenue Estimates

The Revenue Estimates for 2012/13, as set out in the Estimates Book submitted to Budget Council, be approved subject to the amendments set out below.

3. Improving Public Health and Tackling Poverty and Deprivation.

£

Many of the initiatives set out below are linked together in the fight against poverty. In many cases tackling the root cause of problems will also lead to reductions in the kind of problems which can create stress and poor mental health, which in turn affect physical health, and life expectancy.

Tackling Unemployment

Extension of Reach out worklessness programme.

The sum of £1m be allocated for one year to continue the successful Reach Out programme to support workless residents into employment, which has included the provision of over 20 weekly work clubs delivered in community locations across Wirral and which by December had already helped 759 people into work, 57 more than its stated target, with five months still to run on the contract.

1,000,000

65 more ILM place

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to the Wirral Intermediate Labour Market programme to fund another 65 places for workless residents who are experiencing a number of barriers to employment, enabling them to compete after 12 months for work in the open labour market, taking the total number of places created to 165.

500,000

33 more apprentices

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to the Wirral Apprentice Programme for 16 to 24 year olds, to fund a further 33 Apprenticeships, bringing the number of apprenticeships secured to date to 346.

500,000

It be noted that in November the rate of reduction in JSA claimants for 18-24year olds had decreased five times faster in Wirral than the national average

Supporting Local Businesses

It be noted that since March 2009 Invest Wirral has assisted in projects which have secured more than 3,000 jobs and investments of around £40m, and that the Marine Point leisure and retail development in New Brighton has brought over 700 new jobs to the area.

Expansion of Wirral's green economy

The sum of £100,000 now be allocated for one year to encourage the expansion of Wirral's green economy, in line with the recommendations produced by the Green Growth Scrutiny Panel. This should include the consideration of a "market place" style event aimed at raising public awareness of the products and services provided by the local green economy, the possibility of developing a data base of all green skills training providers in the North West, working in conjunction with relevant partners in higher education, Connexions and Job Centres and an assessment of the possibility of developing a green accreditation scheme similar to the Wirral Trader, again in conjunction with the relevant partners.

100,000

Measures to help local traders

The “Free after Three” parking initiative designed to help local traders be continued while research is undertaken to collect concrete evidence on the benefits of this scheme and alternative schemes, looking at retail and town centre needs as a whole, in order to ensure that the money invested reaches those it is designed to help, with the option of re-focussing the investment as necessary to achieve maximum benefit for local traders. The Director of Technical Services is asked to report back to Cabinet within six months on the best way forward.

400,000

Capital Scheme to improve investment in New Brighton

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning is asked to bring to Cabinet the capital scheme to support improvements in street scene and car parking in New Brighton in order to increase the potential for investment in the Marine Point Development, which is currently hindered by the poor quality of its immediate surroundings

1,200,000

Capital scheme in Hoylake to increase attractiveness for Open Golf visitors

The Director is also asked to bring to Cabinet the capital scheme for improvements immediately outside Hoylake Train station, including the creation of a new town square, prior to the return of the Open Golf championships in 2014, in order that both schemes can be accommodated in the current programme as slippage occurs.

1,200,000

Tackling Child Poverty.

24% of children in Wirral are living in poverty, with some areas having much higher concentrations of child poverty, the highest being 72%. These measures are in line with aims expressed in Wirral’s child poverty strategy “Roots and Wings”.

Free early education for disadvantaged two years olds

The sum of £569,000 in government grant be spent in moving towards the goal of providing all disadvantaged two year olds 15 hours of free early education from September 2013. Criteria will be designed to include a range of factors from economic disadvantage to social exclusion and isolation and particular high risk categories.

569,000

Wirral to pilot national approach to improving life chances for children in poverty

Working in partnership with the Public Health Healthy Child programme, the sum of £100,000 be allocated for one year to pay for the costs of research with Cambridge University, arising from the report “The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults” produced by the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances led by Frank Field MP.

100,000

This shows that the most important period influencing a child's future life chances is the time between conception and starting school. The report requested the development of two sets of measures which will assess a child's cognitive, physical and emotional skills, the first at the age of two to two and a half, and the second measuring school readiness when a child first arrives in the primary school reception class.

This £100,000 will pay for the development of the first set of indicators, when parenting skills are crucial, which will show how effective parental support has been and what is needed to make it more effective. Cambridge University will carry out the research with appropriate teachers and early years foundation workers like Health Visitors on Wirral, where the suggestions for the development of the indicators were first raised.

This means Wirral will know how well their children are developing, and will be able to target, and test, the best means of improving this development.

Wirral will act as a pilot for a potential national approach when the indicators have been devised and tested. The development of the second set of indicators is already funded, and will be carried out in Wirral schools with Teachers and Head Teachers.

Multi-agency project for hard to reach families with multiple and complex problems.

The sum of £100,000 revenue be allocated to the creation of a multi-agency project designed specifically to contact and work with hard to reach families with multiple and complex problems and provide high levels of sustained intervention, providing a holistic package of support. This project to be based around the concepts originally put forward by the Wirral Child Poverty Partnership in a lottery bid, ensuring an integrated rather than overlapping approach, with measurable outcomes and evidence of long term cost benefits. **100,000**

Money for looked after children

The sum of £20,000 be allocated for one year to looked after children to provide a range of activities, including residential opportunities and special events, as well as funding the larger Children in Care Council and a special website. **20,000**

Increase in foster and adoption fees

The sum of £160,000 be allocated to pay for an increase in foster and adoption fees. **160,000**

Extending fostering fees to friends and family

The sum of £450,000 be allocated in order to pay fostering fees to friends or family members who take on the responsibility for looking after a child. **450,000**

Extending range of free food deliveries

The sum of £15,000 be allocated to allow for the leasing and maintenance of a van for Wirral Foodbank to allow them to extend their ability to deliver free food to those most in need. **15,000**

Paying a living wage

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated to allow the Council to take a lead in paying all its employees a living wage, in line with recommendations with the Anti-Poverty Strategy to promote the policy of paying a living wage to all employers in the Liverpool City Region **50,000**

£250.00 for lower paid workers.

That it be noted that the sum of £600,000 is contained within the base budget to allow a continuation of last year's payment of £250.00 to employees earning under £21,000. **600,000**

Improving Access to debt counselling and advice services

The sum of £10,000 be allocated to increase publicity levels around debt counselling and advice services, with Libraries and One Stop Shops acting as the first point of referral, and to refresh the current service to include issues of fuel poverty, with energy efficiency advice, Welfare Benefit advice surrounding the changes in Welfare Benefits and the loss of working family tax credits, and other appropriate services. **10,000**

Creating a Pilot Wellness Centre

The sum of £20,000 be allocated to assist in the creation of a pilot "Wellness Centre", in conjunction with Public Health, using a One Stop Shop in an area of high deprivation, which will combine the current One Stop Shop activities with a series of health and lifestyle issues in order to contribute to the overall health and wellbeing of Wirral residents in an integrated way, with consideration being given to the potential for siting this pilot in the Leasowe Millennium Centre. The Director of Public Health be asked to report to Cabinet on the creation of a pilot Wellness Centre, and the Director of Finance to report on the potential for a merged one stop shop/library in the Millennium Centre. **20,000**

Improving Adult Mental Health

Crisis and respite care

The sum of £500,000 be allocated to Adult Mental Health Services to continue and develop the current range of mental health services at Fernleigh, taking into account consultations currently taking place. **500,000**

Get into reading

The sum of £100,000 be allocated to continue the therapeutic programme developed by Get into Reading to build self confidence and reduce exclusion and isolation **100,000**

Improving Safeguarding

Strengthening management structures in Adult Social Services

In the light of the recommendations in the AKA report, and recommendations made as part of the Self Evaluation and Peer Challenge exercise, to endorse the restructuring in Adult Social Services which strengthens management with a Deputy Director post, and includes the new senior post of Head of Safeguarding and Care Governance. **107,000**

Meeting new child protection demands as the impact of the recession affects families

The sum of £100,000 be allocated for the appointment of two temporary posts for Assessment Team Social Workers to cope with the increase in demand which is in danger of leading to overloaded case files and to set up a pilot working with a cluster of primary schools to look at alternate and improved ways of working between schools and Social Care teams. **100,000**

That it be noted that the funding for the Family Support Unit which deals with issues of Domestic Violence and abuse is to be continued with the assistance of the Community Fund at the same level as last year.

Meeting Increased Demand in Social Services

That the sum of £1m be allocated to Adult Social Services which will facilitate the commissioning of domiciliary night visiting services, which will reduce pressure elsewhere and support people more effectively in their homes, with the aim of preventing hospital admissions and reduced admissions to residential care. It will also allow further development of the STAR assessment and reablement service to provide 7 day on site cover on discharge from hospital, integrated into co-located teams in community and primary care. **1,000,000**

Prioritising Prevention

Early Intervention and Innovation Fund for Council Services

That, in the light of the urgent need to refocus services on prevention and cut the costs of dealing with more intractable problems further down the line, the sum of £2m be used to create an Early Intervention and Innovation Fund specifically to attract new bids from Council Services for programmes where early intervention is likely to reduce costs elsewhere. **2,000,000**

Early Intervention and Innovation Fund for the Voluntary Sector.

That the sum of £300,000 be set up to allow members of the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector to bid for similar projects. **300,000**

That it be noted that the investment in these two funds is in addition to the £5.5m already in the Efficiency Investment Fund, and that these sums of money are a vital source of investment to allow the Council to change its ways of working in order to meet the severity of the financial changes ahead and to demonstrate its commitment to change.

Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour

Improving anti-social behaviour services.

That the sum of £290,000 be allocated to support the Anti-Social Behaviour Team, and that a wide ranging review take place of related services which cover Community Safety, alcohol harm reduction programmes, the provision of diversionary activities for young people, and other appropriate services in order to ensure the Council is delivering a fully integrated service to Neighbourhoods which have made it quite clear in their individual neighbourhood plans that the reduction of anti-social behaviour is their top priority. The Chief Executive is asked to report back to Cabinet on this review in the course of 2012. **290,000**

Provision of sports mobile to increase opportunities for diversionary sporting activities.

That the sum of £25,000 revenue be allocated to the leasing and maintenance of a vehicle and the purchase of lighting and sports equipment to allow mobile sporting activities to take place in the dark as well as daylight., and to increase the number of activity sessions possible. **25,000**

Improving the Environment

Preventing fly tipping in urban areas.

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated for one year to a pilot project specifically designed to engage with the community and develop ways of preventing fly tipping in chosen areas of terraced housing, both through enforcement and through understanding the issues that lead to tipping and tackling those at source, with the aim of spreading the lessons learnt across other urban areas in the borough where fly tipping is a problem. **50,000**

That a further £20,000 be allocated for high profile signage and use of Mobile CCTV to improve enforcement across all relevant urban areas and a report be brought to Cabinet as soon as possible detailing the operation of the pilot and the wider publicity and enforcement campaign. **20,000**

Maintaining inflation on the Biffa Contract pending a review

That the sum of £677,000 be provided for one year to pay for contractual inflation on the Biffa contract, pending a detailed review of the Contract and efficiencies possible.

677,000

Improving Road Safety 20mph zones

That the sum of £285,000 be allocated from the £550,000 20mph reserve to kick start the programme by using conventional traffic calming measures in the three residential areas where there is an accident record. These are Leeswood Rd, Mavis Rd and Woodland Road area in Woodchurch, the Downham Road area in Birkenhead and Earliston Rd and Belgrave Rd area in Wallasey.

285,000

That work is undertaken to consider possible locations for pilot schemes to measure the success of signage without enforcement, with one location being Ladymount Primary School in Pensby where residents have already submitted a substantial petition

That the programme is rephased over another year to allow for the consultation on new guidance on 20mph limits promised by the Government's for 2012 to take place in the hope that they will strengthen the enforcement and signage position to allow for successful 20mph zones to be put in place, with variable time signs as appropriate.

Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance Compliance Unit

That the sum of £250,000 be allocated to the creation of a Corporate Governance Unit, to ensure that measures are put in place to improve Corporate Governance and those measures are monitored and enforced.

250,000

Corporate Governance Solicitor

That the sum of £50,000 be allocated for the appointment of an additional solicitor in legal services, with primary responsibility for Corporate Governance.

50,000

5. That it be noted that the cost of the policy options detailed above will be met from the additions to balances outlined in the reports on Reserves and Provisions, and the report on savings from the Benefits budget and the additional £2.06m identified in the change Programme for 2012/13.

That it be further noted that savings of £5.4m as reported to Cabinet on the 21st February 2012 within the Change Programme for 2013/14 and that those savings will cover the ongoing expenditure without creating any additional requirements in 2013/2014.

6.

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 75 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

- (i). the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 75 or over on 1 April 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) £818,095,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;
- (b) £685,924,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £132,171,000 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) £1,246.22 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	£830.82	B	£969.28	C	£1,107.75	D	£1,246.22
E	£1,523.16	F	£1,800.10	G	£2,077.04	H	£2,492.44

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 0.6% Wirral Council Tax reduction.

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	£117.15	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.24

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

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

WIRRAL COUNCIL

LABOUR AMENDMENT

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	268,675,500
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	297,371,400
Potential departmental overspends	0	4,000,000	0
Contribution from balances	(7,165,900)	(11,688,300)	(10,630,500)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
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	132,171,000
Collection Fund Surplus	1,300,000	0	1,455,100
TOTAL INCOME	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE			
General Balance at 1 April	14,070,600	14,070,600	16,405,300
Adjustment (following 2010/11 outturn)	0	1,000,000	0
Contribution from Capitalisation	0	2,600,000	0
Budgeted contribution	(7,165,900)	(7,688,300)	(10,630,500)
Provision to meet departmental overspends	0	(4,000,000)	0
Release of Housing Benefit Reserves	0	5,000,000	0
Release of Other Reserves and Provisions	0	5,423,000	0
Release of Technical Services Reserve	0	0	285,000
GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH	6,904,700	16,405,300	6,059,800

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – BUDGET AMENDMENT 1

PEOPLE'S DIVIDEND

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

That the Budget proposed by Cabinet 21 Feb be amended as follows;

Delete at page 1, paragraph 7:

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

and replace with:

This year, the Council has a one-off sum of money that has been released from reserves, based on reports from the Director of Finance and agreed by Cabinet on 21 February. This is money that was put aside for specific purposes, is no longer needed for those purposes and is currently sitting in the Council's bank account. This money was collected from, and belongs to Wirral households and we should give it back. Therefore, the sum of £4million is to be redistributed (with no impact on the overall financial position of the Budget 2012/13 proposed by Cabinet on 21 February) and paid in the form of a one-off council tax rebate payment, as a **'People's Dividend' of £30 to all Wirral households**. Council recognises that this can have a real and positive impact as a stimulus to the local economy and will be distributed in a way that will proportionately benefit those in lower Council Tax bands the most.

No rebate will be payable in respect of empty properties or second homes. Any other applied discounts will also apply to the value of the rebate.

Council Tax levels will also be set to ensure that there is **no overall increase in Council Tax** by absorbing the precept increases from balances in 2012/13 at a cost of £740,000. It should be noted that the Cabinet proposal of 21 February was for a 0.48% increase in Council Tax.

It also be noted that this represents an effective progressive rebate in Council Tax for 2012/13 as shown in the table below.

Table: Comparison of effect of the 'People's Dividend' amendment.

Council Tax Band	Council Tax (inc. precepts) in Cabinet budget	Cabinet rebate	Net Cabinet Council Tax	Council Tax (inc. precepts) in Lib Dem amendment	Lib Dem rebate 'People's Dividend'	Net Lib Dem Council Tax	Difference between Cabinet and Lib Dem proposals
A	£980.79	£22.00	£958.79	£976.14	£30.00	£946.14	£12.65
B	£1,144.24	£25.67	£1,118.58	£1,138.82	£30.00	£1,108.82	£9.76
C	£1,307.72	£29.33	£1,278.39	£1,301.51	£30.00	£1,271.51	£6.88
D	£1,471.18	£33.00	£1,438.18	£1,464.20	£30.00	£1,434.20	£3.98
E	£1,798.11	£40.33	£1,757.78	£1,789.58	£30.00	£1,759.58	-£1.80
F	£2,125.04	£47.67	£2,077.37	£2,114.96	£30.00	£2,084.96	-£7.59
G	£2,451.97	£55.00	£2,396.97	£2,440.34	£30.00	£2,410.34	-£13.37
H	£2,942.35	£66.00	£2,876.36	£2,928.40	£30.00	£2,898.40	-£22.04

Note: 9 out of 10 households are Bands A, B, C or D and benefit more from these proposals in comparison with the Cabinet proposals.

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, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:

- (i). the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 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) £818,095,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act;.
- (b) £685,924,900 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
- (c) £132,171,000 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) £1,246.22 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	£830.82	B	£969.28	C	£1,107.75	D	£1,246.22
E	£1,523.16	F	£1,800.10	G	£2,077.04	H	£2,492.44

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 0.6% Wirral Council Tax reduction.

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	£117.15	C	£133.88	D	£150.62
E	£184.09	F	£217.56	G	£251.03	H	£301.24

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

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

WIRRAL COUNCIL
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT
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)	(10,344,500)
BUDGET REQUIREMENT	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
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	132,171,000
Collection Fund Surplus	1,300,000	0	1,455,100
TOTAL INCOME	294,829,000	295,011,600	286,740,900
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)	(10,344,500)
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	8,060,800

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – BUDGET AMENDMENT 2

AREA FORUMS

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

In the 'Your Neighbourhood' section, 'Investing in the people's priorities', add a new section:

Council welcomes the additional resources devolved to area forums and the removal of further barriers to the local determination of spending and notes that the total amount allocated for 2012/13 is over £1.1million.

Council believes that the 'one size fits all' model is unsustainable and resolves to reallocate the total budget between the forums based on equal shares, plus an assessment of relative need (with no impact on the overall financials). Therefore, Council instructs that 70% of current Area Forum funding be allocated on the basis of equal shares, and 30% allocated on the basis of IMD, as these indices are broadly recognised as the best indicator of relative need.

Each Area Forum will be required to set out their own Budget, using the Neighbourhood Plans as the initial basis for prioritisation of Area Forum resources. As well as the devolution of funding to Area Forums, the Local Democracy Working Party is requested to give urgent consideration (as an embedded part of any new committee structures brought forward) to giving Area Forum Councillors delegated authority for agreeing the allocation of Area Forum budgets.

Chief Officers are also requested to review and identify devolvable budget lines and make recommendations as to the fairest method of distribution.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – BUDGET AMENDMENT 3

TRADE UNIONS

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

That the Budget proposed by Cabinet 21 Feb be amended as follows;

Trade Union contribution:

Under 'Cutting the cost of Council administration', delete "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."

and replace with:

For the next twelve months we will fund this activity from the Council's efficiency budget whilst we conduct a full review. Council believes that the scale of investment in these services should be a reflection of workforce numbers and the duties required for adequate representation and that work to establish this should be undertaken as

part of this review. We will give a commitment to ensure that sustainable arrangements are in place for appropriate funding in future years at the conclusion of the review.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – BUDGET AMENDMENT 4

COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND LOCAL SHOPPING AREAS

Proposed by: Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by: Councillor Dave Mitchell

Anti Social Behaviour:

Under 'Investing in the people's priorities' add to end of paragraph on Anti-social behaviour; "This review will include the implementation of community justice in this vital area."

Helping our local shopping areas and Free After Three:

Under 'Your Economy', insert additional paragraph after the paragraphs on 'helping our local shopping areas' and 'free after three' parking;

- A thorough evaluation of the results and economic impact of the measures included in the Budget to assist our local shopping areas will be reported to an appropriate Cabinet meeting in order to help inform future targeting of resources. £20,000 to be allocated from the Efficiency Investment Budget to carry out this evaluation.

Following a combined debate, and Councillor Green having replied, each amendment was put to the vote as follows:

The Labour amendment was put and lost (30:36)

Liberal Democrat amendment (1) was put and lost (9:57)

Liberal Democrat amendment (2) was put and carried (66:0)

Liberal Democrat amendment (3) was put and lost (9:57)

Liberal Democrat amendment (4) was put and lost (9:57)

Resolved –

- (1) That Cabinet minute 317 be amended by the addition, within the 'Your Neighbourhood' – 'Investing in peoples priorities' a new section, as follows –

following:

.....by our Area Forums to target as they see fit: £5000 per forum

insert:

"Council welcomes the additional resources devolved to area forums and the removal of further barriers to the local determination of spending and notes that the total amount allocated for 2012/13 is over £1.1million.

Council believes that the ‘one size fits all’ model is unsustainable and resolves to reallocate the total budget between the forums based on equal shares, plus an assessment of relative need (with no impact on the overall financials). Therefore, Council instructs that 70% of current Area Forum funding be allocated on the basis of equal shares, and 30% allocated on the basis of IMD, as these indices are broadly recognised as the best indicator of relative need.

Each Area Forum will be required to set out their own Budget, using the Neighbourhood Plans as the initial basis for prioritisation of Area Forum resources. As well as the devolution of funding to Area Forums, the Local Democracy Working Party is requested to give urgent consideration (as an embedded part of any new committee structures brought forward) to giving Area Forum Councillors delegated authority for agreeing the allocation of Area Forum budgets.

Chief Officers are also requested to review and identify devolvable budget lines and make recommendations as to the fairest method of distribution”.

Our libraries are about more than

- (2) That it be noted that Cabinet minutes 316 (Schools Budget 2012/2013), 324 (Carbon Budget 2012/2013) and 322 (Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2012-2015) are therefore confirmed.**

132 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2012/13

The Council gave consideration to minute 67 of the Employment and Appointments Committee held on 28 February 2012 and to the report of the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management in relation to the Pay Policy Statement 2012/2013. His report was submitted, in accordance with Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, which required Council’s to determine and publish annual pay policy statements.

The Employment and Appointments Committee –

- (1) Noted the Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2012/13.**
- (2) Recommended to Council, for approval, the Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2012/13.**
- (3) Noted that the proposed introduction of the Living Wage was included within the Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2012/13.**
- (4) Noted the responsibility of the Employment and Appointments Committee to ensure the provisions set out in the Pay Policy were applied consistently throughout the Council, and to recommend any amendments to the Full Council.**
- (5) Approved that Wirral Council become an advocate of a living wage.**

On a motion by Councillor Jeff Green and seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie, it was –

Resolved (65:0) (one abstention) – That the Pay Policy Statement 2012/2013 be approved.

133 **VACANCIES**

The Leader of the Council stated that he would notify the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management of changes to Committee places and to nominations to Outside Bodies, which were required as a consequence of changes to Cabinet membership.

134 **CHANGING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS - PROPOSAL TO RETURN TO A COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented his report upon changing governance arrangements and, in particular upon a proposed reintroduction of a committee system, which would involve all Member decisions being made by committees made up of councillors from all parties to reflect the political balance of the authority.

The Leader of the Council commented that, in view of the lateness of the hour and the need for the matter to be fully debated, its consideration should be deferred. He moved that –

“In accordance with Standing Order 9(k) this meeting stands adjourned until 6.15pm on Wednesday 7 March 2012”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes and supported by Councillor Tom Harney.

The motion was then put and it was –

Resolved (66:0) – That in accordance with Standing Order 9(k) this meeting stands adjourned until 6.15pm on Wednesday 7 March 2012.

135 **RECONVENED MEETING**

Further to minute 134, the Council reconvened to consider the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management’s report on ‘Changing Governance Arrangements’. Apologies were received from Councillors Blakeley and Rowlands.

136 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with the particular matter to be debated or determined at this reconvened meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest. No such declarations were made.

137 **CHANGING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS - PROPOSAL TO RETURN TO A COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

Further to minute 134, the Council considered the following motion, moved by Councillor Harney and jointly seconded by Councillors Green and Foulkes, and it was then –

Resolved (64:0) –

Council notes the Report of the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management and welcomes the progress made following the Council decision of 14 February, 2011.

Council thanks all those who have contributed to the work to date including members of the Democracy Working Party.

Council recognises that it does not at this time have sufficient information to make any substantive decisions concerning a possible change to its governance arrangements.

Council resolves:

- (1) To refer the report to the Democracy Working Party (DWP) to progress this matter.**
- (2) To ask the DWP to continue their work and report to Council in April.**
- (3) The report of the DWP will contain a risk assessment of any proposals or options outlined in the report, an analysis of the benefits of piloting a new system prior to its introduction, and an assessment of the financial and staffing implications.**
- (4) To authorise the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to discharge the costs of any external advice from balances.**
- (5) The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management is also requested to explore whether organisations such as the Local Government Association could provide advice and assistance.**
- (6) The DWP be asked to include consultation with the public as part of further work on the new governance arrangements.**