



Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Special Meeting

Date:	Wednesday, 5 December 2012
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

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

Members are reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they are subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

2. BUDGET OPTIONS (Pages 1 - 84)

The following documents are attached for Members' consideration –

- **'What Really Matters?' Budget Options Questionnaire**
- **Summary Paper for Regeneration and Environment**
Specific Options for consideration by this Committee –
 - Pre Planning Advice
 - Apprentice Programme
 - Handy Person Service
 - Restructure of Regeneration, Housing and Planning
 - Home Insulation Scheme

- BME Support Programme
- Supporting People Service
- Invest Wirral

- **Summary Paper for Transformation and Resources**
Specific Options for consideration by this Committee –
 - Marketing and Public Relations
 - Destination Marketing
 - Tranmere Rovers Sponsorship

3. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR



**PLEASE RETURN BY
31st January 2013**

Budget Options from the Chief Executive

“I offer these options for consideration by Councillors, residents and staff according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves – taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so reducing as much as possible the impact on services to residents, particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.”

Graham Burgess, Chief Executive of Wirral Council

You can complete this questionnaire online at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters, or hand it in at any Council One Stop Shop, Library, Children's Centre or Leisure Centre. You can also post it back to: What Really Matters, Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton Street, CH44 8ED

Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

You will see from the chart on the next page, we have been largely successful in developing these options to reduce the impact on residents as much as is possible. I guarantee that will always be our overriding principle as we strive to make the savings we are being forced to make.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

Graham Burgess,
Chief Executive.

Your details

Please provide your e-mail address if you would like Wirral Council to send you updates about Council services and future consultations. Your information will be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and will never be passed on to any unauthorised third party.

Your email address: _____

If you don't have an email address please provide your postal address:

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

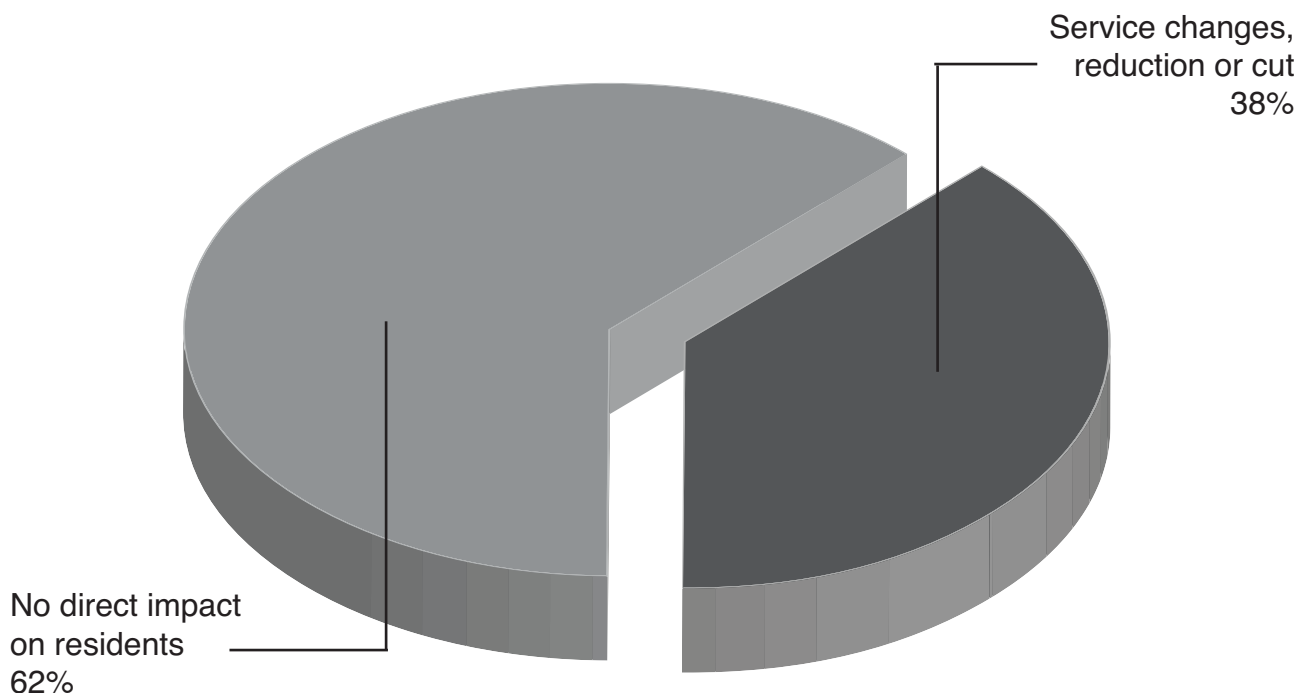
_____ Postcode: _____

What is your relationship to Wirral Council? *(please tick all that apply)*

- Resident Member of staff Local business
 Partner agency/organisation Voluntary/community organisation

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation please tell us its' name:

Where the savings come from



You will see that this questionnaire is split into four sections:

Section A: **Transformation and Resources**

Section B: **Regeneration and Environment**

Section C: **Families and Wellbeing**

Section D: **About You**

There are quite a lot of options, and questions, within this document. All questions have choices to best describe your view. Please tick one box for each option.

Please feel free to complete either as much or as little as you would like – every response, no matter how small, will be counted.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible; we have tried to develop them to follow what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters, calling into any One Stop Shop or Library, or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

Section A: Transformation and Resources

REDUCING COUNCIL MANAGEMENT

Wirral Council has around 4800 employees. Some of the structures in departments, and services, are no longer fit for purpose and could be updated and reduced, to achieve major savings. This option involves a total restructure and significant reduction in middle and senior management layers across the entire Council.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

WORKFORCE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

The Council's current salary costs are £102 million. Another £6 million is spent on salary enhancements based on national and local conditions of service. This option is designed to reduce this expenditure by £4 million through making changes to employees' terms and conditions, including car mileage, phones, unpaid leave and single time working.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PROCUREMENT

The Council is looking to make savings and increase income through the way it pays for goods and services, through starting to charge schools for work it does and also through paying some invoices and bills through an online system.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The way the Council manages its cash flow and borrowing could also be significantly improved to bring in major savings. The Council will fund road repairs, building investments and other works through internal funds rather than borrowing, which will save around £1.7m.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CIVIC SERVICES (THE MAYOR OF WIRRAL)

The Mayor undertakes a range of civic and fundraising duties throughout their term of office. The option here is to make a saving through re-designing the service to offer better value for money.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ELECTIONS

The Council currently operates a system of three elections every four years, with Councillors elected for a four-year term. The option here would be to hold 'all-out' elections every four years, where all Members would be up for election for a four-year term.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

REDUCING THE COST OF DEMOCRACY

The Council currently operates a model of governance known as Strong Leader, which involves a Cabinet and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, plus a number of other committees, who work to set Council policy, make and scrutinise decisions and set the Council budget. This option would involve a review of the Council's constitution and number of committees, and related meetings, to bring savings and a reduction in staff.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICE

The Council invests funds in its computer equipment, which is used by thousands of Council employees on a daily basis. This option involves centralising, and significantly reducing, the funding spent on providing computers, printers and other IT equipment to Council, including reducing the number of employees required to service the equipment.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING

The Council's communications and engagement division is responsible for promoting Wirral as a place, the Council's services, consultation activity and public relations and media activity. There are a number of options in this area, including a reduction in the core marketing budget of 50%, stopping the sponsorship of Tranmere Rovers Football Club,

which would bring a saving of £135,000 and removing the funding which is used to subsidise tourism and visitor events throughout the borough.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

AREA FORUM FUNDING

The Council invests funding each year into its programme of Area Forum events. This funding is available for communities to pay for additional Council services or to pay for community or voluntary groups to perform projects and activities. The option here is to cancel the currently frozen allocation of Forum funding, and to further remove the funding from the Council budget in future years, to be replaced by a new method of engaging and working with communities.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

BETTER USE OF BUILDINGS

The Council owns an extensive and varied number of buildings, from which it delivers services and provides back office support. This option involves closing the Acre Lane and Municipal Buildings and relocating staff elsewhere.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

TRANSFORMING BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Council has a range of administration staff throughout the Council, who provide support to departments. The option here is to bring together administration into three business units to support each new Council area, to ensure reduced costs and higher efficiency.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

RESTRUCTURE OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT DIVISION

This Council department is responsible for a number of functions, covering Council buildings, human resources and legal services. This option proposes restructuring and reducing the division as well as investigating the outsourcing of part of the department.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Transformation and Resources?

Section B: Regeneration and Environment

PARKING

Car Park charges vary extensively across Wirral. It is much more expensive, for example, to park in Birkenhead than in West Kirby. The proposal here is to standardise car parking charges across the borough, and reduce the 'all day' charge to a competitive rate of £2.50, and bring in annual and seasonal permit rates in outer Birkenhead car parks. This would also involve reducing staffing across the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

Garden waste is at the moment collected free of charge from Wirral residents. The option here is to stop the free kerbside collection of waste and begin charging for the service. On average, Councils who charge for this service charge in the region of £35 per year.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION

The 'ERIC' service is available for people to have items of large household waste collected and disposed of. The current charge for this service is £20 per collection; this option would involve raising this charge to £26.50 per collection.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

PRE-PLANNING ADVICE

The Council currently provides pre-planning application advice free of charge, many other Local Authorities across Merseyside charge. The option here is to introduce a fee for all pre-planning advice.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

APPRENTICE PROGRAMME

The Council has for the past few years funded 167 people to complete Apprenticeships, with a further 114 positions available during the current financial year. There are 2 options available here, the first is to remove the budget for this programme, which would end the Wirral Apprentice Programme in its current form; and the second is to reduce the budget to this programme, and explore opportunities to develop a Liverpool City Region Apprentice scheme. Please tell us which your preferred option is:

- Remove the budget for this programme
 - Reduce the budget for the programme and develop a Liverpool City Region scheme
-

HANDYPERSON SCHEME

The Council runs a handyerson scheme, which is open to all residents and means people can request maintenance on their homes for a relatively cheap price. The option here is to redevelop this service, meaning it is targeted more effectively at people who have recently been discharged from hospital, and reducing the service available to the general public.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

RESTRUCTURE OF THE REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING DIVISION

This option involves a service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning division, as a result of some significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the work of the department.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

KENNELS SERVICE

The Council operates a kennels service, which serves to re-home abandoned and stray dogs. This option would involve closing the specific Wirral service and instead providing a joint service with partners across Merseyside. This would mean residents would have to travel to Halewood to collect their dogs.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HOME INSULATION

The Warmer Wirral programme provides free or reduced cost home insulation for Wirral residents.

- Remove the budget for the programme
 - Reduce the budget for the programme, allowing for some energy efficiency and fuel poverty work to continue
-

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The Environmental Health team perform a wide range of duties related to the health, wellbeing and safety of the borough. This option involves developing a partnership with Cheshire West

and Chester to put a mutual organisation together to deliver the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TRADING STANDARDS

Within the Trading Standards team there are a number of officers who are responsible for providing support to vulnerable customers. This budget option involves reducing this service by a number of officers.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

PEST CONTROL

The Pest Control service provides a treatment service to residents and companies. The option in this area involves reducing the department by one member of staff.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

The Council has a contract in place to cover all highway maintenance, which is soon going to be re-tendered. This option would reduce the proactive maintenance of roads, footways, signage and street furniture, and mean the Council would focus most resources on maintenance where there is a direct safety issue.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

STREET LIGHTING

The Council operates a scheme whereby people perform lighting inspections at night. This option would involve stopping these night-time inspections and also, where it is safe to do so, switching off lighting either completely or for part of the night.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HIGHWAYS DRAINAGE

The Council performs regular maintenance work across drainage inspections on the highways, ensuring that risk of flooding is brought as low as possible. This option would reduce the service, and mean focusing the activity on targeted inspections at problem sites.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

STREET CLEANSING

The Council, through its contractor, invests a significant amount of resources in collecting litter and cleaning the streets. This option would involve reducing that investment, and working with the community to improve levels of street cleanliness. If successful, this reduction would be rolled out across other areas.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

The Council provides school crossing patrol sites across the borough. This option would involve inviting schools to pay for the crossing

patrol service and removing the cost to the Council. If schools are not prepared to pay for the service then it may be removed.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REMOVAL OF THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

Wirral has over 200 sites which are classified as being 'parks and open spaces', which are a mixture of large and local parks, general green spaces, beaches and bowling greens. This option would involve stopping maintenance on a number of parks, green spaces, beaches and grass verges and working with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REDUCTION IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

This further option relating to parks involves the reduction of maintenance whereby some areas will be cut every three weeks, rather than two, a reduction in bedding displays and the pre-planned maintenance programme. Rural grass verges would also be left for wildlife and only cut where there is a road safety issue. The Council would work with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

HOUSING SUPPORT FOR BME COMMUNITIES

Part of the Council's supporting people team is a small service which helps to provide support for people from black and minority ethnic communities to live independently. The option here is to remove this service, as other services both from the community and public sectors, including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, could potentially fill the gap.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

The supporting people programme delivers services to around 5,500 Wirral residents; making sure that those people with housing related needs are supported. This option would involve reducing this budget through renegotiating contracts, tendering services, remodelling services and closing services.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

INVESTING IN WIRRAL'S BUSINESSES

Wirral Council runs a service called Invest Wirral, which is designed to provide a wide range of business support services. The option here would be the reduction in support to businesses through a number of avenues, including business investments, grants and other funds. These funds may be replaced regionally. This option would also reduce duplication with other services by removing the Invest Wirral events budget and social enterprise support.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COMMUNITY PATROL AND DOG FOULING

Wirral Community Patrol consists of more than 20 officers who work towards improving the security and safety of Wirral Council properties but also making Wirral a safe place to live, work and visit. The Council also provide a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team which aim to improve and protect the Wirral environment by reducing dog fouling. The option is to stop paying enhanced salaries for evening and weekend work for Community Patrol, except for bank holidays, and also to reduce the size of the dog fouling enforcement team.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

MODERNISATION OF LEISURE

Currently, Leisure Centres across Wirral have periods where usage is extremely low, compared to the number of staff working at the sites. The option in this area is to make a number of changes to pool operating times and working practices, including closing Europa Leisure Pool and Guinea Gap Pool during less busy times, and reducing the staff requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre among others.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Regeneration and Environment?

Section C: Families and Wellbeing

COMMUNITY MEALS

The Council provide an outdated, but appreciated, meals-on-wheels service. This service charges people £2.68 per meal. The proposal here is to increase this charge by 79p per meal to a total charge of £3.47 per meal – which is what the service costs the Council.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

The Council provides a range of technology which is installed in people's homes to enable them to be more independent, such as bed occupancy sensors, property exit sensors, pull chords, flood detectors and falls detectors. These devices are installed and monitored 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free of charge. The proposal here is to implement a weekly fee for this service of £3. This charge would only be applied to those people who could afford it.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHARGING FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Wirral Council's charges for adult social care services are among the lowest in the region. Many Councils charge 100% of a person's disposable income, Wirral currently charges 75%. The proposal here is to bring our charges in line with other North West Councils and charge 100% of a person's total disposable income.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TARGETED SUPPORT THROUGH NHS CONTRACTS

The Council works closely with the NHS to provide a whole range of services for vulnerable adults; including nursing care, residential care and reablement (where a person is supported back to full health following an illness) among others. In this area the Council will work with colleagues in the NHS to reduce the use of higher cost services such as nursing and residential care to focus on community based alternatives such as Assistive Technology, intermediate care and reablement.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

EXTRA CARE HOUSING

The Council provides over 200 extra care housing units across the borough, which is a form of sheltered housing and residential care. The option here is to re-tender those contracts and look to provide the same level of service at a lower cost.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

RESIDENTIAL AND RESPITE CARE

The Council owns 3 residential care homes which provide short breaks for people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. The option here is to reduce the number of facilities from 3 to 1, while still providing the same service. More people will then benefit from supported living arrangements rather than residential care.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

DAY CARE AND DAY SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

The Council owns a number of Day Centres which support people with Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities and Mental Health difficulties. All of these centres need, to different extents, substantial investment and, due to younger people choosing to use other services, demand is substantially reducing. This option would involve investment in some centres, and the closure of others, while at the same time transforming the service to ensure it offers a modern and quality service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR CARERS

When a carer is assessed for support, a “carer’s budget” is identified and allocated to the person. This option would involve changing this system and replacing it with an annual grant, which would be based on a banding system currently

used by other Councils. This would be based on the carer’s role and requirement for support, and would mean some carers receiving less financial support, but some receiving more according to their need.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

TRANSPORT POLICIES

The Council provides transport for over one thousand people across the borough every day to travel to Council facilities and schools among other places. This option would involve a full review of that transport, with a view to stopping providing transport to some or all Council facilities and schools. This would require people using the transport to either contribute towards the cost of the service or find other ways to travel to the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

AREA TEAMS FOR FAMILY SUPPORT

Area Teams provide preventative services for vulnerable children and families. This option would involve reducing the number of teams from 11, to 4, and require the teams to re-focus their work based on need.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SCHOOLS MUSIC SERVICE

The music service has for many years received a subsidy from the Council. This option removes that subsidy and requires the service to bring in enough income to break even.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

OAKLANDS OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

This service provides outdoor recreation and education activities, primarily for schools. The service also receives a subsidy from the Council, and this option would involve removing that funding and requiring the service to break even.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

The Council provides an educational psychology service, which helps all children with special educational needs. The proposal in this area is to reduce this service and have a more targeted approach, whilst continuing to meet statutory requirements.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

FOUNDATION LEARNING

This is a programme offered to schools to support vocational learning for young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training).

The proposal in this area is to remove this funding and instead provide support through the careers education information, advice and guidance service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COMMISSIONING OF PARENTING SERVICES

The Council invests money with organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide parenting and family support, and the proposal in this area is to target a reduced service at those families most at risk of poor outcomes.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

SCHOOLS BUDGET

The Council has a budget for schools maintenance and also contributes towards a 27-year Private Finance Initiative agreement. The proposal in this area is to transfer the costs currently met by the Council to the schools budget.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND INCOME FROM SCHOOLS

The Council provides a number of services to schools, some of which are provided free of charge as part of the Council's legal obligations, some which are charged back to schools and some which are provided for no cost, or a cost which is lower than it costs to deliver. The option in this area is to reduce the level of free services the Council provides for schools and increasing the income from those services provided to Academy schools.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR GRANTS

The voluntary, community and faith sector provide a number of services such as luncheon clubs, advocacy support and day care with funding provided by the Council. The proposal is that the Council reviews these services as part of a wider Council approach to ensure more targeted and cost effective services, based on early intervention and prevention.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

ASSESSMENT AND CARE MANAGEMENT

The Council is reviewing its assessment and care management process working closely with the NHS to improve the experience of care service users and make quicker the process from referral to support plan. The proposal is that through making the process more efficient, it would be possible to respond to financial pressures by reducing the number of social

workers and assessment support workers, although it is accepted that this would potentially negate improvements made through redesign.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

Many Councils have changed their services for learning disabilities, and developed supported living opportunities as an alternative to residential care. The option in this area is to develop supported housing arrangements for people with learning disabilities as an alternative to residential care.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVIEW OF EQUIPMENT AND EMERGENCY DUTY

The Council provides equipment for people such as wheelchairs and also provides an emergency out of hours care management system. The proposal here is to review both services and investigate a shared service with the NHS to save money.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

YOUTH AND PLAY SERVICES

The Council provides and maintains 6 play schemes and 14 youth facilities, as well as extensive outreach projects. The option here is to review the number of play schemes, reduce the outreach service and integrate all youth clubs into the main four youth 'hubs'.

This would involve centralising all of the youth services within the main four hubs, and investing in a new Youth Zone for Central Birkenhead.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

YOUTH CHALLENGE

The Council also funds services around risk taking behaviour (alcohol and drugs) as well as positive activities such as drama and arts. The option here is to reduce the budget of those services and ensure that the budget is used to target the most vulnerable.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND SURE START

The Council has 16 Children's Centres, as well as a number of satellite children's centres. The option here is to reduce universal services from children's centres, to transfer provision of day-care to Private, Voluntary or Independent providers and to charge for most universal services which are provided. This would also include the release of a number of satellite children's centres, and a reduction in the Sure Start budget.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

HELP AND ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Council provides an optional service for people who are over 65, which provides support and advice about benefits and how to access other voluntary and Council services. The option in this area is to remove this service, and instead use existing contracts with a number of voluntary and community organisations to provide it on our behalf.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CAREERS, EDUCATION INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Through a contract, the Council provides a wide range of careers advice to young people. The option in this area is to reduce this service so it is targeted at those most in need.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The Council provides funding for children with disabilities to go on short breaks, which provide respite for them and their families. The option here is to reduce the number and range of the short breaks which are provided, while still providing the service.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

This is a service which provides support for children with mental health needs. The option here is to reduce this service by one third, and target resources at those most in need.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

REVENUES AND BENEFITS

As Welfare Reform and Universal Credit is rolled out the workload in the Revenues and Benefits division will increase. Staffing levels will, however, be able to reduce to reflect the new arrangements. The option in this area is therefore to begin to reduce staff in this division as the new Universal Credit is implemented.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

INCREASING COURT COSTS

The Council at the moment charges non-payers of Council Tax £65. This is below the actual costs, which are around £87. The option here is to increase these charges to £75.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

There are a range of discounts and exemptions on Council Tax available to Wirral residents, including reductions for properties undergoing major repair and long term empty properties. The option in this area is to conduct a full review of these discounts with a view to increasing income from Council Tax.

- I support this under the circumstances
 - I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
 - I find this completely unacceptable
-

COUNCIL TAX PENSIONER DISCOUNT

Pensioners aged over 70 in Wirral currently receive a discount of 7.76% against their Council Tax. The option here is to reduce that discount or change the qualifying criteria.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF

Wirral last year paid discretionary business rate relief for charities, voluntary, social, educational and sporting organisations for a total of over £1m. The option here is to review and potentially reduce the amount of businesses and funding which is used to help these businesses with their rates.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

LIBRARIES AND ONE STOP SHOPS

Wirral Council has a network of 13 One Stop Shops and 24 Libraries. The options in this area include: further merging of libraries and One Stop Shops, the reduction of opening hours, particularly around Christmas and New Year, and the increased use of volunteers in the running of the facilities. The option of community asset transfer will also be part of this option. The Council also propose to reduce the book fund, which libraries use to purchase new books.

- I support this under the circumstances
- I accept this if it is absolutely necessary
- I find this completely unacceptable

Is there anything you would like to say about the savings options being proposed under Families and Wellbeing?

Section D: About you

This section is all about you. It would be helpful when we analyse the results of this questionnaire for us to know a little bit about you.

The next few questions are optional – you don't have to complete them if you don't want to. None of the information you give us will be used for any other purpose than reviewing the results of the questionnaire, and will never be passed on to any third party.

Your gender:

- Male Female Prefer not to say

Your ethnicity:

Please tick a box or state your ethnicity:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other British | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other white background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> White & Black African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White & Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other mixed background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Asian background | <input type="checkbox"/> African |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other Black background |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab | <input type="checkbox"/> Gypsy, Romany or Irish Traveller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |

Your religion or belief:

What is your religion?

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh | <input type="checkbox"/> Any other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | | | |

Or, what is your belief?

- | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humanist | <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Pagan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Any other belief | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | | |

Your disability:

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Please tick all the boxes which apply:

- Physical Disability Mental Health Sensory impairment
 Learning Difficulty Prefer not to say

Your age:

- Under 16 16-24 25-44 45-64
 65+ Prefer not to say

If you are under 16, please do not answer the remaining questions.

Marriage or Civil Partnership:

Are you currently:

- Married Single Divorced Widowed
 In a Civil Partnership None of the above Prefer not to say

Your sexual orientation:

Please tick one box -

- Heterosexual Lesbian or gay Bisexual Asexual
 Prefer not to say

Gender Reassignment:

Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

- Yes No Prefer not to say

Thank you for your time and involvement - it will make a difference.

**www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters
engage@wirral.gov.uk
0151 606 2030**

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Regeneration and Environment
Budget Options
from the Chief Executive

The Budget Challenge in Wirral

Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

Graham Burgess,
Chief Executive.

Regeneration and Environment Services in Wirral

Wirral's local environment and economy are some of the biggest factors in driving the quality of life, health and levels of achievement for our residents.

The Council invests every year in maintaining and improving the local environment, and in stimulating the local economy through helping our local businesses to succeed and expand, and encouraging businesses to start up or relocate in Wirral.

Economy and Regeneration Services

We want Wirral to be a place where businesses flourish and people have access to jobs and quality affordable homes.

In order to achieve this, it is vital that the Council continues to support a thriving local economy which provides the bedrock for social, economic and environmental well being amongst all of our communities. We want to continue to support business growth, but to do so in a more focused manner that works with and utilises the experience and resources of other key stakeholders. We want to support the creation of jobs by the Private Sector through providing a supportive and enabling environment, not only through the day to day support provided by the Council, but also through speedy and appropriate use of the Council's Planning powers.

Having a quality and affordable place to live is important to ensure that all our residents live in a safe and appropriate home that allows them to gain maximum benefit for access to jobs, leisure, amenities, education and to gain associated social and economic benefits that they both desire and deserve. We will continue to work with Registered Social landlords and Private Sector landlords to maximise the number and range of quality homes for rent. We will continue our programmes to restructure the Housing Market and work with House Builders to increase the number of new homes built in Wirral.

Regeneration and Environment Services in Wirral

In what are tough economic times for both the Council and the nation as a whole, we must ensure that the limited resource available maximises the opportunities to achieve our vision for Wirral. It is therefore necessary to focus continuing resources into areas that will have most impact, when maximising the opportunity to utilise other resources available. We have to make some difficult decisions as we simply do not have the resources to continue spending the same amounts to achieve these goals.

However, the Council will continue to allocate its own resources into activities that will help support business, create jobs, allow access to those jobs for Wirral residents and allow people to live in safe, affordable and relevant housing.

Environment Services

Councils, including Wirral Council, have long had the principal role in commissioning or delivering a range of near-universal municipal services to all households and neighbourhoods in their area. These include, amongst others, waste and recycling, street cleansing, highway maintenance and traffic management, road safety, parks and open spaces.

Wirral Council has delivered its services through a range of different channels. These include direct via its own staff, through contractors and through shared service arrangements with other councils.

Increasingly, these functions have been

carried out in various partnership or collaborative arrangements with other public agencies (e.g. police and fire service) or, where appropriate, with volunteer or other community groups.

This broad based strategy has served the public well and remains a sound basis for service delivery. It will, however, need reviewing and rebalancing in light of changing needs, increasing pressure on resources and through value for money challenge.

It needs to be recognised that there is projected to be a marked, steady, decline over the foreseeable future in national resources to support these types of services. That will inevitably be mirrored in councils across the country, including in Wirral.

Against that background and conscious that demand for services is likely to outstrip the ability to supply, it will be necessary to make difficult decisions. Such decisions will need to be taken against a strong evidence base and with the limited resources allocated within clear priorities.

Increasingly, there will be a clear need to manage demand and, more generally, to manage public expectations of what the Council can and cannot do. The role of community and other groups will increase in significance as the Council itself diminishes its activities in the more discretionary areas where it is not required by statute to provide services or functions. More broadly, there will need to be a new relationship between the

respective roles of the council and citizens.

Universal Services

Many of what are now universal municipal services are provided as a result of statutory requirements but where the actual level or quality of service is not closely defined. Other services which people are used to seeing as universal have a greater or lesser degree of discretion as to whether they are provided at all and to what level of provision.

There will be the need for decisions, informed both by evidence and from the views of the public and their representatives, as to the balances needing to be struck. It seems clear that the extent and quality of municipal services enjoyed now cannot be sustained with the resources available or in prospect. The difficult decisions will be around just what emphasis should be given to what; unfortunately it seems entirely unrealistic to expect to retain current service levels in these service areas.

Targeted Services

It will be necessary to identify service areas that are not, as such, universal across the community but meet particular needs. These more targeted service areas are often those where council provision sits alongside or competes with other providers.

In future, a sharper judgement will need to be made on whether the Council should continue to operate a particular service or whether other provision would suffice to meet the need of the community. In any case, these targeted services need to be assessed by the council on their commercial merits just as much as on their social benefits. Without this approach, costs will inevitably have to be transferred and carried by the rest of the community who don't benefit from the service in question.

Outcomes Approach

Within the two-pronged approach of Universal and Targeted services it is right, and drives to the heart of a Council's role, that full account is taken of the range of "outcomes" that it wants to achieve for the communities it serves.

Outcomes emerge and are defined through the political and corporate planning process, through societal norms and sometimes from statute.

A particular tension is that many highly desirable outcomes require services or interventions that are non-statutory, are discretionary and have to compete for a diminishing pool of local resources. It is also the case that many of these are highly regarded by local communities.

This suggests that the relationship between delivering services to citizens and citizens taking more direct responsibility for outcomes needs to change. This will be at the heart of the

agenda for community outcomes and will help to shape the Council's own organisational emphasis.

Service Strategy

Our strategy is based fundamentally on an outcomes approach, clear policy rationale and using evidence based prioritisation.

We shall set these out clearly so that all can see both how and why decisions have been taken.

We shall enhance and sharpen up our approach towards explaining to and engaging with direct customers and other service users. This will help manage expectations but it is also appropriate to undertake active means of influencing the behaviour of targeted groups to help meet their needs as well as to help reduce unnecessary demand. The influencing of behaviours, helping to support and facilitate change, will be a core feature of the future strategy.

Many user needs can be met through relatively straightforward self service channels and we will increasingly provide these through various means.

We shall streamline and simplify our organisational structure and arrangements. Overlapping functions will be eliminated, professional "silos" will be dismantled where practical and multi-functional teams created. We shall have much more multi-skilled and multi-tasked staff, especially in inspections,

enforcement and community education. This will enable us to become more focussed, more efficient and reduce the number of parallel activities that we undertaken at present.

We shall reduce the amount and levels of management and redesign managerial spans of control. Our support services will themselves be designed to directly support service needs and will complement, and not duplicate, the Council's central support services.

We shall ensure that our service arrangements are sufficiently adaptable to meet a wide range of future challenges. These include resource levels, different models of procuring delivery of services and the like.

We shall enhance our collaborative arrangements with other agencies and work hard to engage with interested groups and the communities of Wirral more generally. In that regard we have a key role to play in supporting area or neighbourhood based arrangements and our new organisational approach has this at their heart.

Budget Options

The budget options in this report have been proposed to try and re-design the services we deliver; to make the savings we need to make but at the same time maintain safety standards and protect the quality of services as much as possible.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible, we have tried to develop them following what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

That consultation focussed on four main themes: raising income, changing service delivery, re-shaping services and stopping services. The options in this report also follow those four main themes.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

What You Told Us:

“The Council should look to raise income through raising or introducing charges. Raising charges should take every step to not disadvantage or marginalise vulnerable groups by making services unaffordable, and the services selected for increased charges should be chosen carefully.”

Option: Increase Income from Parking

Currently, car parking charges vary across the borough. It is much more expensive to park in Birkenhead or Liscard, for example, than it is to park in West Kirby.

This option would include standardising charges across Wirral to bring them all onto the same current tariff as Birkenhead, and reduce the ‘all day’ charge to a competitive rate of £2.50 and annual and seasonal permit rates in outer Birkenhead car parks.

This option would also include reducing the administration involved in servicing parking appeals, reducing what we spend on parking enforcement, and reducing what we spend on collecting cash from and performing maintenance on parking meters.

This proposal rationalises the charging regime across the borough. Broadly, parking in western areas would have charges increased to align with the existing charging regime in the East. The greater tendency for use of car parks in the West would generate additional revenue. This will remove the inequalities of low charges in West Wirral but will mean charges in these areas i.e. Heswall and West Kirby will increase substantially.

Through standardising car parking charges across the borough, income is expected to increase by £150,000 per year although business in some locations is expected to fall. Through setting a competitive ‘all day’ rate in outer Birkenhead Car parks, this should encourage a return to parking in some of these areas.

**Budget Saving:
£281,000**

Option: Garden Waste Collection

Garden waste is currently collected free of charge from Wirral residents once per fortnight. Councils are not required by law to either offer the service for free, or offer it at all. This service is popular among residents, and contributes towards improving the local environment and improving recycling levels.

The option would remove the free kerbside collection of garden waste and replace the service with either a chargeable 'opt in' service operated by the Council, or an 'opt in' subscription service operated by a private or community organisation.

This option could potentially result in increased levels of fly tipping; which would be mitigated through help and support to allow residents to home compost and reduce their garden waste.

**Budget Saving:
£1 million**

Option: Increasing Waste Charges

Wirral Council operates a service where bulky or large items of household waste can be collected, for a charge, which is known as the ERIC service. The Council also provides replacement bins for a charge for residents who have lost or damaged their bins.

This option would increase the cost of the Environmental Reciprocal Improvement Carrier (ERIC) service from the current fee of £20 to £26.50 per visit. It will further review the policy for replacing bins and increase the existing charge, while tightening up the policy on who receives free replacement bins.

This option does bring the risk of increases in fly tipping and complaints, but also provides the opportunity for residents to work together to get better value from the service, for example neighbours requesting one visit to collect both of their bulky items. It will also increase income to the Council to safeguard against further price rises and reductions to other services.

**Budget Saving:
£80,000**

Budget Options

Option: Planning

The Council currently provides pre-planning application advice free of charge, whereas many other Local authorities including Sefton, Liverpool and St Helens all charge a fee.

The option in this area is to introduce a fee for all pre-planning advice.

Evidence from other Councils is that these schemes work and generate income, careful monitoring will be put in place to make sure that pre-planning advice still continues.

**Budget Saving:
£10,000**

What You Told Us:

“The Council should make savings through changing the way services are delivered through outsourcing, sharing services or encouraging groups of staff to take over the running of services – as long as the Council kept the responsibility for the quality of the service.”

Budget Options

Option: Wirral Apprentice Programme

The current Wirral Apprentice Programme is creating 114 apprenticeship placements in Wirral, and has been charged to provide a 12 month subsidy for NVQ level 3 placements and nine months for NVQ level 2. The programme has been well received by Wirral businesses and has been successful in providing apprenticeships.

This option would involve stopping the programme, and therefore not providing a further 55 apprentice positions across Wirral over the next 12 months.

This would mean that only the national apprenticeship scheme would then be operating in Wirral. However, there may be an opportunity of developing an apprenticeship scheme for the Liverpool City Region. In this case there would be a greatly reduced cost to the Council and Wirral would then be offering a programme similar to the other City Region authorities.

**Budget Saving: £500,000
or £420,000 dependent upon
which option is agreed**

Option: Handyperson Scheme

The work of the Handyperson Service helps people to continue living independent lives in their own homes for longer, resulting in fewer clients needing to access health and social care services at an earlier stage. The aim of the service is to offer an effective solution to a wide range of housing related problems, at a reasonable cost delivered by trusted Council employees.

The option here is to redevelop the service, meaning it is targeted more effectively at people who have recently been discharged from hospital, and reducing the service available to the general public.

The service reaches some of the most vulnerable in our community, who might normally be reluctant to accept more intensive help. Many clients are older owner-occupiers who are not known to statutory health and support services, yet they often lack a network of family or friends to support them to maintain their homes.

**Budget Saving:
£209,400**

Budget Options

Option: Restructure of the Regeneration, Housing and Planning

A service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning (RHP) Department to address reducing external grant income and changes to external organizations providing services.

Over the last 12 months there have been a number of significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the structure and work of the Department:

- Regeneration Team: The proposed team restructure/ reduction will realise revenue savings of £143,700.
- Invest Wirral: Through the removal of the International Links and Social Enterprise posts, a saving of £47,900 for each will be made (a total of £95,800).
- Investment Strategy Team: The Inward Investment Manager post is currently vacant. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £60,800.
- Housing Strategy Team: This team currently has a vacant Principal Officer Housing Strategy post. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £38,600.

The work of the Regeneration Team has reduced as access to external funds such as those via NWDA and ERDF have diminished, particularly in relation to funds for development of the “place”. The proposals involved reducing the number of project managers from six to three, that will continue to allow sufficient resource to deal with the deliverable projects seeking some form of external resource.

There has recently been a successful bid for EU funds from a voluntary organisation in Wirral to develop support for Social Enterprises and referrals will be made to that organisation.

The Government has recently increased resource into UKTI to encourage businesses to look at international markets for additional business. Referrals will be made direct to UKTI for relevant business support.

Not filling the vacant Inward Investment manager post will mean that we will be unable to have a dedicated senior officer dealing with the creation of Inward Investment. We will spread that role across a number of senior officers and increase our publicised “offer” via the LEP and UKTI.

The Principal Housing Officer post has been vacant for a while and not filling the post will mean continuing as we have, with duties shared amongst the team.

**Budget Saving:
£338,900**

Budget Options

Option: Kennels Service

The Council currently operates a collection service during office hours and a standby service for the collection of strays outside normal hours. Detained animals are kept at the Council kennels in Birkenhead.

The option here would be to stop delivering a specific Wirral Council service and instead join negotiations with city region partners to deliver a cross Merseyside scheme to make savings.

The kennels in Wirral would close and owners would need to travel to Halewood to collect their pets, which could be a disincentive and harm the current 80% re-homing rate.

**Budget Saving:
£100,000**

Option: Home Insulation

The Warmer Wirral programme provides free or reduced home insulation for Wirral residents.

There are two options in this area; either to remove the budget for the programme, which would provide a saving or reduce the budget and still allow some work relating to energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

This could lead to some people having less access to affordable insulation programmes, but would be mitigated by a number of new national programmes.

**Budget Saving:
£985,600 to remove the budget.
£925,600 to reduce the budget**

Budget Options

Option: Environmental Health

The Council's Environmental Health team perform a wide range of duties related to the health, wellbeing and safety of the borough.

This option involves developing a collaboration for this function with Cheshire West and Chester in order to develop a mutual organisation to deliver the service.

This option would have no impact on the level of service.

**Budget Saving:
£109,000**

Option: Trading Standards

Within the Council's Trading Standards division there are a number of officers who are responsible for providing support to vulnerable customers.

This budget option involves reducing this service by One Fair Trading Officer and a Senior Trading Standards Officer

Some of this workload for the proposed option would be taken up by other staff. A further option for this area is to abolish the Fair Trading Scheme.

**Budget Saving:
£71,000**

Budget Options

Option: Pest Control

The Pest Control Service provides a treatment service to domestic customers and fulfils contracts for the private sector.

The option in this area involves reducing the department by one member of staff.

This proposal will see the loss of one full time member of staff, which could have a potential impact on the level of service.

**Budget Saving:
£30,000**

What You Told Us:

“You said we should look at non-universal, optional services and investigate if they could be reduced or stopped.”

Option: Reduce Highway Maintenance Activity

A potential reduction in grants means the Council will have significantly less funding to spend on road maintenance in the coming years. At the moment, the Council has a contract with an external company to complete all road maintenance work.

This option would reduce proactive maintenance of roads, footways, signage, and street furniture. This means that the Council would only complete maintenance where there is a direct safety issue.

This option will still ensure our roads and highways are safe, but reducing the more cosmetic work done on our roads will reduce the quality of our highways network in places. This brings a number of risks which will need to be mitigated, but ensures that we are using our remaining resources in a responsible manner.

**Budget Saving:
£588,000**

Option: Reduce Street Lighting

At the moment the Council operates a scheme which involves people travelling the borough to perform lighting inspections at night.

This option would stop night time inspections of lighting and where it is safe to do so, switch off lighting either completely or part of the night.

To make this option work, the Council would trial equipment to reduce energy consumption and also work with volunteers, such as Neighbourhood Watch Groups, to replace the scouting service, as well as extensively promoting the methods of reporting faulty lights. A safety-first approach will be taken to reducing or switching off lighting.

**Budget Saving:
£265,000**

Option: Rationalise Highways Drainage Service

The Council performs regular maintenance work across drainage inspections on the highways, ensuring that risk of flooding is brought down as low as possible.

This option would rationalise the wider drainage inspection service through targeted inspections at problem sites and reduced levels of maintenance.

Money can be saved by changing the inspection arrangement for highway drainage, and prioritising only those areas at greater risk of flood.

**Budget Saving:
£106,000**

Option: Reduce Street Cleansing

The Council, through its contractor Biffa, ensures that Wirral streets are well cleaned. This is, however, at a high cost.

The option would pilot a reduction in quality of service with a view, if the results are acceptable, to reducing the level of street cleansing in future years.

A reduction in Council street cleaning will be balanced out by encouraging partnerships with the voluntary/community sector to keep Wirral's streets clean, however, street cleanliness in some areas may still reduce. This option would involve reducing the levels of cleaning in rural areas, industrial areas and some residential areas, but would not affect tourist 'hot spots', main retail areas and the main gateways in and out of the borough.

The Council recognises that this option might increase customer dissatisfaction and will work with the community to encourage more local ownership to reduce litter.

**Budget Saving:
£1 million**

Option: Reducing School Crossing Patrols

The Council currently provides school crossing patrol sites across the borough, which are funded and managed almost entirely by Wirral Council. This is not a statutory service, and is operated during school term time only.

This option would involve charging schools for the crossing patrol service and removing the cost to the Council entirely.

The council would continue to employ the staff and provide professional supervision. Many safety schemes (e.g. Pelican crossings) have been introduced on Wirral roads and in some cases the provision of these schemes and retention of the crossing patrol may be duplicated. Schools would be invited to consider this aspect, and would be expected to provide the funding for each of the patrol staff.

**Budget Saving:
£330,000**

Option: Maintenance of Parks and Open Spaces

Wirral has over 200 sites which are classed as being 'parks and open spaces'; these sites are a mixture of large and local parks, general green spaces, beaches and bowling greens.

There are two options in this area:

The first is to stop the maintenance of the non-golf and football pitch areas of some parks as well as stopping maintenance of a number of local parks, green spaces and beaches.

The second option is to reduce the maintenance regime, so that more areas are left for wildlife and only cut once a year, and some areas being cut on a three week cycle rather than the existing 2 week cycle among other reductions.

The Council would work with, particularly, Friends groups to ensure that parks could be maintained through community management, and aims that by 2015 Friends groups had a major role to play in the maintenance and future development of all parks.

**Budget Saving:
£850,000 for option one or
£450,000 for option two**

Budget Options

Option: BME Support in Supporting People Service

Part of the Council's Supporting People team is a service which, while not statutory, is designed to provide support to help vulnerable people from the BME community to live independently in accommodation and prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, custody, tenancy breakdown and homelessness.

The option would involve stopping this service, and requiring other organisations to provide this type of service.

Since the establishment of this service in 2005, a number of other community based organisations have been developed in Wirral who provide services to the BME Community. As a result there is increased capacity to assist clients in accessing services.

Further potential clients can also access other floating supported services tendered in 2009. The services are available to all socially excluded vulnerable groups, including those clients from the BME Community. We also hold a contract with Wirral Citizen's Advice Bureau to provide housing advice and support to all Wirral residents, which provides a very similar service to this one.

**Budget Saving:
£100,000**

Option: Supporting People

The supporting people programme currently costs £9.75 million and delivers services to around 5,500 Wirral residents. The service makes sure that people who have housing related support needs are supported to maintain their tenancies and remain independent.

The option would involve reducing the budget of this service through renegotiating contracts, tendering services, remodelling services, and closing services.

The impact of this budget reduction would be mitigated by the remaining resources within the division being more closely focussed on the most vulnerable.

**Budget Saving:
£2 million**

Budget Options

Option: Investing in Wirral's Businesses

Wirral Council operates a service called Invest Wirral, which provides a wide range of business support services including supporting private sector investment, providing business advice, investment in start up businesses, a business forum, the Council's green growth strategy, and social enterprise support services.

The option in this area would reduce the support offered to business in a number of locations, including withdrawing the 'Business Angels, investment fund and the Business Investment Grant. These options may be replaced by regional grants in the future. Additional options in this area would avoid duplication with other services by removing the Invest Wirral events budget, and the social enterprise support, both of which should have no implications for Wirral businesses.

These options are proposed in the knowledge that they will impact on the Council's ability to invest to support new businesses, but will be mitigated by working closely with regional and national organisations to provide replacement funding.

**Budget Saving:
£352,000**

Option: Community Patrol and Dog Fouling

Wirral Community Patrol consists of more than 20 officers who work towards improving the security and safety of Wirral Council properties but also making Wirral a safe place to live, work and visit. The Council also provide a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team which aim to improve and protect the Wirral environment by reducing dog fouling.

The option is to stop paying enhanced salaries for evening and weekend work for Community Patrol, except for bank holidays, and also to reduce the size of the dog fouling enforcement team.

The community patrol option would not impact on the level of service delivered to Wirral residents but will equate to a loss of income for the staff involved. In terms of the dog fouling team, there would be an impact for Wirral residents who may see an increase in the levels of dog fouling.

**Budget Saving:
£362,000**

Budget Options

Option: Modernisation of Leisure

Currently, Leisure Centres across Wirral have periods where usage is extremely low, compared to the number of staff working at the sites.

The option in this area is to make a number of changes to pool operating times and working practices, including closing Europa Leisure Pool and Guinea Gap Pool during less busy times, and reducing the staff requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre among others.

These proposals will require changes to the activity programmes in leisure centres which will affect groups such as swimming clubs, but will have the least affect on the majority of users.

**Budget Saving:
£429,000**

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This report proposes introducing a charge for pre-planning application discussions from 1 April 2013. It is estimated that such a scheme could result in income generation of £10,000 to £15,000 in its first year.

RATIONALE

A significant number of Councils across England have introduced a charge for pre-planning application discussions. In the Merseyside area Sefton, St Helens, Halton and Liverpool Councils already have schemes in place and Knowsley are considering one.

In Wirral, Planning Officers from development management and planning policy are spending an increasing amount of time dealing with requests for pre-application discussions and no income is being generated from the professional advice that is being given.

Most of the requests for pre-application discussions are generated by the larger applications typically for new housing and commercial schemes and come from developers, businesses and planning consultants.

Applicants do benefit from the advice that is given in the pre-application discussions and it can lead to quicker decisions once an application is formally submitted. Equally, it also gives the Council the opportunity to shape development proposals to ensure that they meet the strategic aims and priorities of the Council and ensure appropriate development.

IMPACT

Evidence from other Councils shows that such schemes work and generate income. Careful monitoring will ensure that the charges are set at a level that allows pre-application discussions continue.

MITIGATION

The Council will base its charges on schemes that are currently in operation in Merseyside. A review of the scheme will be undertaken towards the end of the first year.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTIONS

This report details the potential budget savings from the revenue budget for the Wirral Apprentice Programme (which provides apprenticeships in SMEs) and identifies three options for Members to consider:

- **Option 1: Retain/Reduce £500,000 Budget**

The Wirral Apprentice Programme currently offers wage incentives from £6,797 to £11,286 depending on circumstances. The average unit cost (including contingency for a potential 2% increase in the national minimum wage next October) is £9,071 per apprentice. The maximum £500,000 would therefore support approximately 55 new Wirral Apprentices in 2013/14.

- **Option 2: Removal of £500,000 Budget**

The Wirral Apprentice Programme in its current form would cease, which would result in a revenue saving of £500,000 from 2013/2014.

- **Option 3: Liverpool City Region Deal: Retaining Match Fund Allocation**

Develop proposals with partners across the Liverpool City Region to utilise National Apprenticeship Service Grant funding, which has been top sliced as part of the Liverpool City Region Deal with Government. If this option can be taken forward then approximately £80,000 will be required as match funding resulting in a revenue budget saving of £420,000.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Wirral Apprentice Programme needs to be reviewed as part of efforts to significantly reduce Council expenditure in light of unprecedented cuts to its funding.

PROPOSED SAVINGS

Ceasing the Wirral Apprentice Programme would result in a revenue saving of £500,000 from 2013/2014.

IMPACT

The cessation of the programme would result in the loss of the opportunity to create approximately 55 apprentices over a 12 month period. It would also mean that only the national apprenticeship scheme would then be operating in Wirral.

Ceasing the programme would have a limited impact on voluntary, community and faith groups as they are not directly involved in its delivery. However, individuals benefiting from apprentice placements may come from one of those sectors.

MITIGATION

There may be an opportunity to develop an apprenticeship scheme for the Liverpool City Region, however, this is subject to a review by HM Treasury and the outcome is not yet known.

WIRRAL HANDYPERSONS SERVICE

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

This option will remove the service provided by Wirral's Handyperson Service to the general public. This service is not statutory but is designed to assist the elderly, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently at home and to enable them to remain safe and secure within their community.

The service will continue to facilitate the fast track hospital discharge element; this service provides a vital role in delivering fast track adaptations to assist the health authority and social care requirements to meet statutory responsibilities regarding delayed hospital discharge.

This option would save £209,400.

IMPACT

Households containing low income, disabled, elderly and vulnerable people could be impacted upon if the Handyperson service is withdrawn.

The work of the Handyperson Service is preventative in nature and enables people to continue living independent lives in their own homes for longer, resulting in fewer clients needing to access health and social care services at an earlier stage.

The service provided corresponds with the government's commitment to greater personalisation, promoting greater choice and control for users of health and social care services.

In the event that other organisations are unable to provide an alternative service, this could impact on individuals and corporate priorities of:

- Protecting our vulnerable adults and children
- Tackling poverty and inequalities in health.

MITIGATION

A reduced number of staff will still facilitate the fast track hospital discharge service, which will continue to be funded through the Communities and Local Government grant of £126,000 until 2015. During the next 2 years options will be explored to identify alternative funding for this element of the service should the CLG funding cease.

In relation to the element of the service currently available to the general public, which is to cease, the Council will explore other ways in which this service might be available e.g. through the establishment of a social enterprise or through links to the Wirral Traders Scheme.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes a non-managerial service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning (RHP) Department.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Over the last 12 months there have been a number of significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the structure and work of the Department. The rationale for this option is all revenue saving related and are as follows:

Regeneration Team

The proposed team restructure/ reduction will realise revenue savings of £143,700.

Invest Wirral

Through the removal of the **International Links** and Social **Enterprise** posts, a saving of £47,900 for each will be made (A total of £95,800).

Investment Strategy Team

The Inward Investment Manager post is currently vacant. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £60,800.

Housing Strategy Team

This team currently has a vacant Principal Officer Housing Strategy post. Deleting this post will result in a saving of £38,600.

IMPACT

Taking into consideration proposed post deletions, workloads for remaining staff would have to be considered.

The proposal will include the deletion of seven posts (two of which are currently vacant).

MITIGATION

- The work of the Regeneration Team has reduced as access to external funds such as those via NWDA and ERDF have diminished, particularly in relation to funds for development of the “place”. The proposals involved reducing the number of project managers from six to three, that will continue to allow sufficient resource to deal with the deliverable projects seeking some form of external resource
- There has recently been a successful bid for EU funds from a voluntary organisation in Wirral to develop support for Social Enterprises and referrals will be made to that organisation
- The Government has recently increased resource into UKTI to encourage businesses to look at international markets for additional business. Referrals will be made direct to UKTI for relevant business support
- Not filling the vacant Inward Investment manager post will mean that we will be unable to have a dedicated senior officer dealing with the creation of Inward Investment. We will spread that role across a number of senior officers and increase our publicised “offer” via the LEP and UKTI
- The Principal Housing Officer post has been vacant for a while and not filling the post will mean continuing as we have, with duties shared amongst the team

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

There are two options to consider in relation to the future of Council-funded home energy efficiency activity in Wirral. They are:

1. Removing the budget for the Warmer Wirral Insulation Programme. This option would reduce Council expenditure by £985,600 annually.
2. Reducing the budget, which would ensure the continuation of some energy efficiency activity and fuel poverty alleviation, but would not fund insulation works. This option would need a budget of £60,000 per annum but would reduce annual expenditure by £925,600.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

If the Insulation Programme were to cease at the end of March 2013 it would have reached 59% of the target at year 3 of the seven year programme - a significant achievement. This has been made possible through the strong partnership between the Council, the delivery agent (Energy Project Plus) and funder / installer (British Gas) using Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT).

The programme is not available to social tenants, where many low income households live, as Registered Providers have responsibility for ensuring their properties meet decent homes standards.

Other Local Authorities with existing Warmer Wirral-type programmes are moving forward (post-CERT) in different ways. Sefton has a loose arrangement in place with Eon whereby they may be referred any potential Green Deal applicants who come through the local authority. The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities which currently offers free insulation is moving forward to have a central role in Green Deal delivery in the region.

All Liverpool City Region local authorities are currently working under the "Project Viridis" banner which is looking for a common approach to delivering the Green Deal and the new Energy Company Obligation (ECO) which replaces CERT. This is likely to involve working with one or two energy companies across the City Region to deliver elements of their ECO funding (probably in low income areas) and this should start by Spring 2013. A common approach to the Green Deal will probably take around 12-18 months to set up.

IMPACT

Option 1 would lead to a reduction in advice and assistance for those in fuel poverty as well as a reduction in the rate of improvement in the energy efficiency of Wirral's private sector housing. However the changes in the national funding regime for energy efficiency will lead to a reduction in the number of loft and cavity wall insulation installations overall whether or not the Council would have continued with a free insulation offer for households.

Warmer Wirral Insulation is delivered by Energy Projects Plus which is a Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisation. The removal of the budget could potentially result in loss of employment (Energy Project Plus currently employs 11 local staff and British Gas employs 23 staff which includes 10 local apprentices).

Energy Projects Plus are contracted to deliver Warmer Wirral Insulation until 31st March 2013.

Both options proposed will lead to a lower level of carbon reduction activity however Option 2 would ensure continuation of carbon reduction activity amongst households, which account for over 40% of Wirral carbon emissions.

MITIGATION

From 1st April 2013 financial incentives for home insulation in private households if there is no Council funded initiative, will be solely through the following:

- a) **Green Deal loans** – from early next year, these will fund energy efficiency works at no up-front cost to the householder. Repayments on the loan, at a predicted interest rate of 7%, will be made through extra payments on electricity bills.
- b) **Low income communities** – a portion of the ECO will fund insulation on an area-by-area basis for households living in the 15% most deprived lower super output areas in England. Information from the Department of Energy and Climate Change identifies that Wirral has 57 LSOA's that meet this criteria.
- c) **Low income households** – for those on certain income related benefits, free loft and cavity wall insulation will be available, again through the ECO.

Through these alternative routes there will be mechanisms for households to obtain insulation either at no up-front cost or through subsidies. Take-up will however very much depend on the level of local authority-led awareness raising activity as well as marketing carried out by Green Deal Providers. Certain households will be excluded from these offers either due to having a poor credit rating (therefore not being able to access a Green Deal loan) or not being on certain types of benefit and living outside low income areas. These households will be expected to pay the full cost of loft or cavity wall insulation (likely to be around £400 per measure).

Within the private rented sector specifically, future legislation is likely to drive the uptake of loft and cavity wall insulation. From April 2018 it will be unlawful to rent out a house or business premises with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of less than 'E'.

Option 2 would mitigate risks associated with under provision of advice and sign-posting services for those in fuel poverty and would reduce the risk of Wirral not getting its appropriate share of ECO funding.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes to cease delivery of the councils Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) floating support service, currently provided by the Department of Regeneration Housing and Planning.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Whilst the service is not statutory the support is designed to help vulnerable people from the BME community to live independently in accommodation and prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, custody, tenancy breakdown and homelessness.

A number of other community based organisations have been developed in Wirral who provide services to the BME Community. As a result there is increased capacity to assist clients in accessing services.

If the service is decommissioned this would result in an annual saving of £100,000 from the Supporting People Budget.

IMPACT

In the event that the other services are unable to absorb the additional workload then this could impact on the individuals and on corporate priorities of

- Reduced service to vulnerable adults and children
- Tackling poverty and inequalities in health.

In ceasing delivery of this service, consultation will be required with existing service users and partner agencies, including contracted services and the community and faith services.

There may also be a potential increase in demand for the services that the voluntary, community and faith groups offer.

MITIGATION

A further option to service delivery would include retaining the service in house; however this would not achieve any savings.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The option outlined below could make £2 million savings from the Supporting People budget effective from April 2014.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Supporting People programme currently costs £9.75 million and delivers services to approximately 5,500 clients in Wirral. The service providers employ approximately 450 members of staff.

The service ensures that vulnerable or disadvantaged people with housing related support needs are supported to maintain their tenancies and achieve/maintain greater independence.

Supporting People funding was previously ring-fenced and the criteria for its use was clearly set down by Department for Communities and Local Government, as was the structure for commissioning and contracting.

Whilst the services are not statutory the support is designed to help some of the most vulnerable people in the community to live independently and prevent problems that can often lead to hospitalisation, institutional care, custody, tenancy breakdown.

IMPACT

The Council must continue to ensure that the most vulnerable people with housing support needs remain able to access appropriate support services and accommodation (such as sheltered and supported housing for older people, hostels for the homeless, refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence, supported housing for people with mental health problems and learning disabilities).

Service reduction will impact on the individuals and also on corporate priorities of:

- Protecting our vulnerable adults and children
- Tackling poverty and inequalities in health
- Creating jobs and attracting investment

It could also have negative implications for other departmental budgets, through increases in: Anti-social Behaviour; health inequalities; demand on other areas / services within the public sector; levels of children entering statutory care; tenancy failure leading to increased homelessness; incidences of people entering costly residential or nursing care; dissatisfaction in the local community.

Due to the level of savings required it will have an impact on the choice and availability of services locally, and could lead to a reduction in employment in Wirral, including that provided by the voluntary, community and faith sector.

MITIGATION

To date, through tendering and renegotiations of contracts and some reconfiguration and rationalisation of services, significant efficiency savings of £590,000 have been made, while the level and type of services available to vulnerable people has been maintained.

However, given the current economic situation, it is necessary to achieve further savings from contracted services through the following actions:

- Re-negotiation of contracts to increase efficiency, effectiveness and to better utilise resources
- Tendering of services
- Remodelling of provisions
- Consolidation and rationalisation of contracts
- Closure of services.

DESCRIPTION OF OPTIONS

It is proposed that some of Invest Wirral's activities be reduced or ceased to realise budget savings of £352,000. This would affect the following services:

- **Business Angels**
Wirral Business Angels facilitates private risk capital of between £10,000 and £500,000 in fast growing local enterprises. Its cessation offers savings of £50,000..
- **Invest Wirral Event Programme**
Invest Wirral forums, workshops and events provide ongoing communication between the Council and businesses. They also provide an important opportunity for networking, supply chain development, collaborations and inter-trading. Its cessation offers savings of £50,000.
- **Social Enterprise Support**
Social Enterprise support provides a package of advice and brokering services for the sector. Its cessation offers savings of £52,000.
- **Business Investment Grant**
The Business Investment Grant Programme was established to provide grants of between £4,000 and £20,000 to local small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) with potential for growth. Its cessation offers savings of £200,000.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council's business support offer needs to be reviewed and restructured in light of the unprecedented budget challenges the Council faces, as well as the new opportunities which will come on stream as a result of the new European regional Development Fund (ERDF) Business Support programme which will launch in the new year.

IMPACT

The potential savings identified in this report would result in the removal of some Local Authority funded business support services

MITIGATION

The impact of delivering these options would be mitigated as follows:

Business Angels – A business angels programme in Wirral has now been launched. In addition, several alternative sources of equity finance are available, there will therefore be a minimal impact on businesses resulting from this saving.

Invest Wirral Events Programme – Programmes similar to those previously delivered will be available via the new ERDF supported programme.

Social Enterprise Support - Wirral CVS has secured ERDF funding to create a post for business support with a specific remit for social enterprise development. It is likely that the new post will co-locate in Invest Wirral for at least 1 day per week. In addition, the Big Enterprise in the

Community programme supports social enterprises at all stages in Merseyside and therefore the impact of the cuts on the future development of local social enterprises is likely to be minimal.

Business Investment Grant - This grant was introduced during the midst of the worst stages of the current recession as banks had stopped lending to SME's. The number of applications for Grants has reduced as banks and other lending institutions begin loaning money to SME's



Transformation and Resources
Budget Options
from the Chief Executive

The Budget Challenge in Wirral

Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

Graham Burgess,
Chief Executive.

Budget Options

The budget options in this report have been proposed to try and re-design the services we deliver; to make the savings we need to make but at the same time maintain safety standards and protect the quality of services as much as possible.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible, we have tried to develop them following what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

That consultation focussed on four main themes: raising income, changing service delivery, re-shaping services and stopping services. The options in this report also follow those four main themes.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

Budget Options

Option: Reduce Council Management

In the first stage of consultation, one of the main themes which emerged was that Wirral residents believe that the Council should drastically reduce the amount of middle and senior managers within the Council.

Wirral Council has around 4800 employees, working to deliver back office and front line services across hundreds of areas. Some of the structures in departments, and services, are no longer fit for purpose and could be updated and reduced, to achieve major savings.

This option involves a total restructure and significant reduction in middle and senior management layers across the entire Council. The Council will also reduce what it spends on agency workers by more than £500,000.

This will also cost the Council; but after initial costs in severance payments, the benefits of restructure in terms of savings in staffing costs will be realised. Pension costs will also be felt for 5 years. Changing the way services are delivered across the Council will help reduce the impact of the loss of personnel and management structures will be modernised and redesigned.

**Budget Saving:
£5.5 million**

Option: Workforce Conditions of Service

The Council currently employs 4800 people, and has a current salary cost of £102 million. Enhancements and allowances based on national and local conditions of service total around £6 million per year.

This option would involve reviewing the Council's current terms and conditions of employment to make financial savings, which would include:

- ***Reviewing car mileage allowances***
- ***Review of enhancements***
- ***Review of policies including mobile phones***
- ***Unpaid leave***
- ***Single time working***

Single time working involves staff being paid enhanced salaries for working unsociable hours. The impact of these proposals affect the Council workforce, but do not put staff at direct risk of redundancy and have in fact been proposed in order to reduce the overall number of redundancies which will be required.

**Budget Saving:
£4 million**

Budget Options

Option: Procurement

The Council will look to make significant savings through improving and streamlining the way it pays for the goods and services it needs to operate.

This will be done through the reorganisation of the Merseyside Procurement Partnership, saving £11,000 per year, introducing a payment card solution to pay small invoices, saving £40,000 per year, and re-charging schools and academies for their use of the procurement systems in the Council, which will generate income of £80,000.

We will also look into all utility payments from the past five years to determine if any overpayments have been made, and instigate a similar project to investigate VAT payments. A full review of the procurement service is also underway to investigate if there are further savings to be made.

Budget Saving:
£51,000 (Savings) | £80,000 (Income)

Option: Treasury Management

Improving the way the Council manages its cash flow and borrowing through Treasury Management systems could generate significant savings.

This option involves funding 'Capital' works, which include road repairs, building investments and other works, through internal funds rather than borrowing.

With current interest rates, this could generate the Council significant saving but could result in borrowing being required later if internal funds are reduced too significantly.

Budget Saving:
£1.7 million

Option: Rationalisation of Civic Services

The Mayor operates a range of civic and fundraising duties throughout the year, the calendar and programme of this being developed by the mayor themselves.

The option here is to change the function to deliver efficiency savings and manage the service within allocated resources. The Council could consider reconfiguring the service to ensure service provided is more flexible and provides greater value for money.

The services provided to the Mayor are crucial to the Mayor being able to carry out the civic role. To enable the reconfiguration of the service, the attendant and officers would be managed proactively and be required to work more flexibly to ensure the highest level of service to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

**Budget Saving:
£50,000**

Option: Moving to a Four-year Election Cycle

The Council currently operates a system of three elections in every four years, with Councillors elected for a four year term.

This option proposes 'all out elections' every 4 years, beginning in 2014 when all 66 members would be up for re-election for a further 4 years.

A further option in this area involves the Council achieving a saving from the budget that would ordinarily be used to deliver an election in May 2013. This is a 'fallow' election year so the budget is not required.

**Budget Saving:
£280,000**

Budget Options

Option: Reducing the Cost of Democracy

The Council currently operates a model of governance known as Strong Leader, which involves a Cabinet and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees, plus a number of other committees, who work to set Council policy, make and scrutinise decisions and set the Council budget.

This option would involve a review of the Council's constitution and a number of committees, and related meetings, to bring savings and a reduction in staff.

A new process for engaging communities will further engage members in influencing the quality of life for residents.

**Budget Saving:
£75,000**

Option: Information Technology Service

The Council invests funds in its computer equipment, which is used by thousands of Council employees on a daily basis.

Wirral Council has around 4800 employees, working to deliver back office and front line services across hundreds of areas. Some of the structures in departments, and services, are no longer fit for purpose and could be updated and reduced, to achieve major savings.

This option involves centralising, and significantly reducing, the funding spent on providing computers, printers and other IT equipment to Council, including reducing the number of employees required to service the equipment.

The same service will need to be provided to Council staff to ensure they are able to perform their jobs effectively, but with fewer resources in terms of both funding and people to be able to do it.

**Budget Saving:
£300,000**

Budget Options

Option: Public Relations and Marketing

The Council has a communications and engagement division, which is responsible for promoting Wirral as a place, the Council's services, consultation activity, public relations and media activity.

There are a number of options in this area, which can be summarised as follows:

- *Reduction in the core marketing budget of 50%*
- *Stopping the sponsorship of Tranmere Rovers Football Club, which would bring a saving of £135,000*
- *Removing the funding which is used to subsidise tourism and visitor events throughout the borough, which would bring a saving of £95,000*

These options would have no direct impact on the level of service received by Wirral residents, but would impact on the level of income the Council receives from the certain services, as well as reducing the potential for community organisations to receive Council funding.

The team also deliver the programme of Area Forum events, and also manage the distribution of Area Forum funding. This funding equates to £390,500 of core Council funding each year. This funding is used to direct additional Council services on a ward basis, and also for community organisations to apply for funding to complete projects and activities within

their own community. In 2012/13, over £700,000 was made available for this purpose and over 180 applications have been received. The distribution of this funding was frozen due to the Council's financial position.

The options in this area are: firstly to cancel the funding allocated for the current financial year, and work with those community organisations who have received funding to try, where possible, to assist with their projects.

The further option is to cease the distribution of this funding for future years, and instead bring forward a new model for neighbourhood working which allows Elected Members and community organisations to shape public and voluntary services in their area in a more fundamental fashion.

These options may have a negative impact on some community organisations in the area; however the Council would work with those groups to ensure that wherever possible their work could continue either through using different funding opportunities or through working in partnership with the Council and other partners. This approach could enhance the ability of communities to influence the quality of life in their local area more effectively.

Budget Saving:
£282,000 Marketing
£390,500 Area Forum Funding 2013/14
£735,350 Area Forum Funding 2012/13

Budget Options

Option: Better Use of Buildings

The Council owns an extensive and varied number of buildings, from which it delivers services and provides back office support.

This option involves the closure of two administrative buildings, at Acre Lane in Bromborough and the Municipal Building in Birkenhead.

These options would mean that the Council staff currently working in those buildings would have to be relocated in another Council building.

**Budget Saving:
£458,000**

Option: Transforming Business Support

The Council has a range of administration staff throughout the Council, who provide support to departments.

The option here is to bring together administration into three business units to support each strategic area, to ensure reduced costs and higher efficiency.

There will be a direct impact on staff and expectations across the Council of administration support, but no direct impact on front line services.

**Budget Saving:
£2.5 million**

Budget Options

Option: Restructure of Legal Services

The Legal and Member services team provide a wide variety of services, functions, support and assistance to the Council. This includes specialist legal advice in relation to major regeneration projects, planning, procurement, contracts, employment, child protection, adult social care and enforcement.

This option proposes a review and restructure of legal services, including fundamental changes to improve the service.

This option will have no direct impact on residents but will impact on staff, and alternative working practices and methods will be explored to mitigate the human resources implications.

**Budget Saving:
£600,000**

Option: Restructure and Outsourcing of Asset Management

The asset management division provides a corporate and strategic approach to the management of the Council's assets; is responsible for corporate asset management planning, and works with departments and services to ensure that the asset base is appropriate for current and future service delivery.

This option involves restructuring and reducing the number of staff employed within the division and then moving forward investigating outsourcing the service.

This would have no impact on Wirral residents but would impact on staff and may lead to a reduction in the amount of work currently completed for external partners.

**Budget Saving:
£100,000**

Option:

Human Resources Restructure

The Council's Human Resources and Organisational Development team support the Council's staff in terms of payroll, personnel and training.

This option is to reduce the number of Human Resources and Organisational development staff to deliver a saving.

This could have an immediate impact in terms of the department's ability to support the Council. A transition plan will be developed to ensure business can continue as normal.

Budget Saving:
£585,000

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OPTION: EVENTS BUDGET

BUDGET SAVING: £95,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION:

The value of tourism to Wirral currently stands at £289 million, employs 4,200 full time equivalent jobs and has increased by 13% over the past five years ie 2007 to 2011.

Events currently form an element of the Council's Destination Marketing delivery plan, and the Council provides events funding for a number of Core Events of international significance.

The Council also provides funding from the Supported Events Budget for a number of community-led events of national and regional significance. Wirral community event organisers apply for funds through an application process and funding is awarded based on the number of visitors attracted and the media coverage gained. The funding criteria also link to the Council's Destination Marketing themes eg Wirral Year of Coast and Countryside in 2012.

The option would be to take the entire Core and Supported Events Budget as a budget saving.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The budget saving will result in a new process to support event organisers – both local and national. This will include providing more detailed information for event delivery; working with event organisers to engage with the private sector to secure sponsorship, and helping them to source other funding streams.

IMPACT

Currently, the return on the Council's investment into both Core and Supported Events equates to approximately £84 received by Wirral's businesses for every £1 of Council events funding. The budget savings may have a negative effect on Wirral's businesses, visitor offer and community groups who depend on the annual Wirral programme of high profile events for their income, visitor breaks and fund raising activities respectively. In addition, the positive media profile of Wirral as a day and short break destination, highlighted through Wirral's comprehensive event programme, will also be lost as a result of the budget saving.

In 2011, over 170,000 visitors were attracted to Wirral's Supported Events and they collectively had an economic impact of over £5 million. The supported events for 2012 are currently being evaluated, at the time of this paper being written, however initial evaluation shows an increase of both visitors and economic impact to the Borough. The budget savings would have a detrimental impact to Wirral's businesses, potential visitor perceptions of Wirral and the media profile of Wirral, if the Supported Events Budget is also lost.

MITIGATION

Support to local and national event organisers would continue through the Wirral Events Advisory Group and on an individual basis as mentioned in the Rationale for Savings. Unfortunately, it is anticipated that a number of the events may not continue if the Council's Events Budget is withdrawn.

OPTION: TRANMERE ROVERS SPONSORSHIP

BUDGET SAVING: £135,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council has sponsored Tranmere Rovers Football Club since the 1989/90 football season. This sponsorship involves having the name of the organisation on the home and away shirts, requiring Club players to promote Council events and activities and a range of additional promotion and engagement benefits.

The option in this area is to cease the sponsorship arrangement, and request the Club to seek commercial sponsorship elsewhere.

RATIONALE

The sponsorship arrangement was originally in place to re-pay a loan from the Council to a club, which was repaid in full in 1998. The Council has since made the decision on an annual basis to continue the sponsorship based on the benefits the Council receives from the arrangement in terms of promoting the borough as an excellent place to visit.

IMPACT

This option would bring no direct impact to residents, but would result in reduced promotion of the borough on a national level. It would further impact on the club who would be required to seek an alternative sponsor.

MITIGATION

The Council will refocus reduced resources on promoting the borough to visitors.

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