



Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Wednesday, 5 December 2012
Time:	6.00 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 3 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

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

Members of the Committee are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary and non pecuniary interests, in connection with any item(s) on the agenda 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 - 72)

The following documents are attached for Members' consideration:

- **'What Really Matters Questionnaire'**
- **Summary paper for Transformation and Resources**
- Options papers relevant to this Committee:
 - Full Management Restructure
 - Staff Terms and Conditions
 - Asset Management Restructure
 - Building Costs
 - Four Year Elections
 - HR Restructure
 - Legal Services Restructure
 - Review of Committee Services
 - The Mayor of Wirral
 - Transforming Business Support
 - Area Forum Funding
 - Revenues and Benefits
 - Libraries and One Stop Shops

**3. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR
(PART 1)**



**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: _____

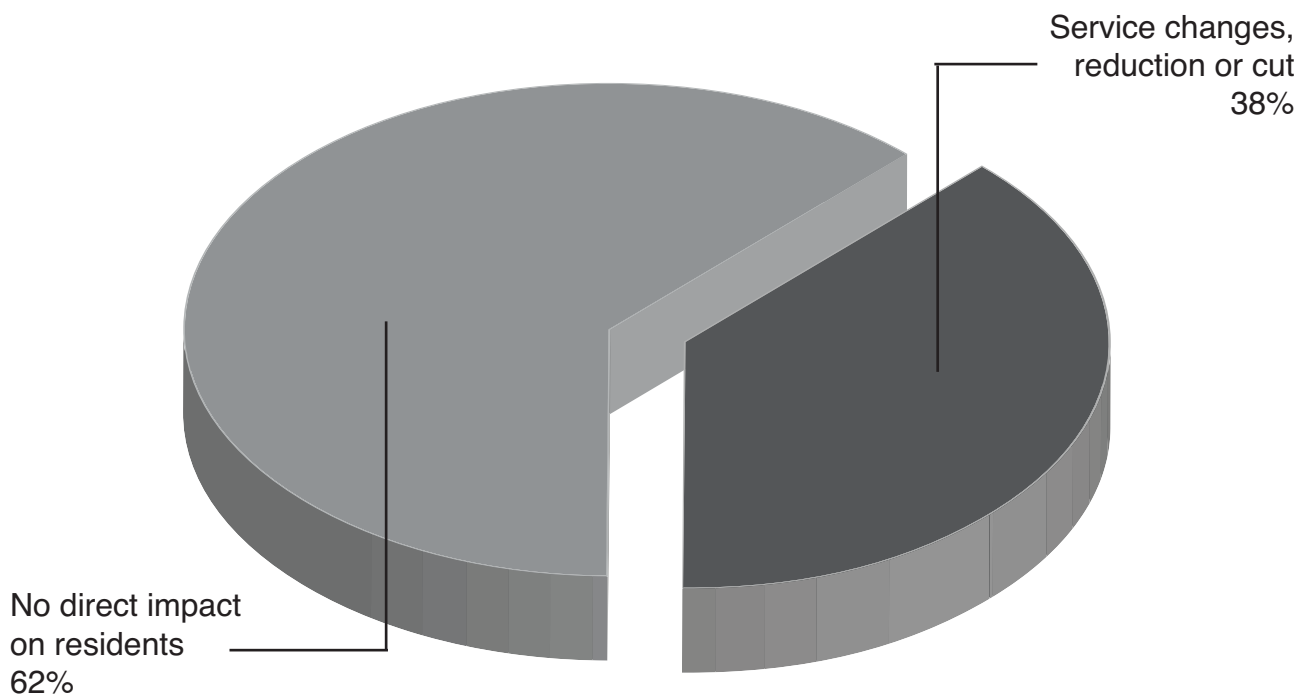
_____ Postcode: _____

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 handyperson 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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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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FINANCE DEPARTMENT SAVINGS

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

A series of proposed savings relating to non-frontline services provided by different parts of the Finance Department.

Treasury Management

Reduce the Treasury Management budget from 2013/14 by £1.7 million to reflect the impact of the previously agreed changes to the profiling and funding of the capital programme and the benefits from the pro-active management of the cash-flow of the Council..

IT Services

Centralisation and an external review of the service started delivering savings in 2012/13 and this is set to continue, delivering further efficiencies of £210,000 in 2013/14 and £90,000 in 2014/15. This is prior to any further decisions which may be taken in respect of the future provision of IT Services within the Council. IT contracts are regularly reviewed and this has delivered a saving in respect of the Uninterruptable power supplies to Cheshire Lines Building of £11,000 per annum.

Revenues and Benefits

The options relating to changes in service provision or the payment of Housing and Council Tax Benefits are contained within a separate report but there is a savings option essentially from the administration of the service. The Government re-imburses the Council for Benefit payments made that meet the Government eligibility criteria. Actions taken by the Council to reduce the level of non-eligible grant spend, fraudulent payments, errors in payments and errors in the final audited claim have led to the Government now re-imbursing the Council an increased amount of our spend in this area. This sees £2 million of 'additional' income / lost grant now received and the Budget projections initially included £1 million for both 2013/14 and 2014/15 in respect of this change. It is now projected that this saving can be achieved in 2012/13 and so is classed as a deliverable saving in 2013/14 and it is proposed that this grant budget be revised to reflect this.

Procurement

The reorganisation of the Merseyside Procurement Partnership, and the funding arrangements, will deliver a saving of £11,000 per year. Option to introduce a procurement card solution to pay the approximately 40,000 invoices for under £100 in value the Council currently processes each year. Formalising by way of a Service Level Agreement the service the Corporate Procurement Unit provides to Academy Schools and Schools. Engaging external specialists to audit all utility payments paid over the past five years by the Council, to discover if any overpayments have been made and the engaging of specialist advisors to assess the Council's VAT payments to see if there is any entitlement to a reclaim of some of those payments could both deliver 'one-off' savings. A review of the procurement service is currently underway, which will be followed by a review of our list of suppliers and the introduction of a category management system.

Management

The Chief Executive has made a commitment to review management across the Council with the aim of reducing posts and costs by around a third. The Finance Department has,

to date, identified a potential saving of £621,000 although work is on-going to increase this figure.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The savings have been identified from actions taken, in the case of Treasury Management and Revenues and Benefits for example, which have delivered savings during 2011/12 and have continued into 2012/13. The proposals are that these now be consolidated within the Budget.

The procurement savings are based upon the experiences of other local authorities in terms of potential 'one-off' savings and others will flow from the review of procurement service. This review will also seek to link with the work undertaken on the commissioning of services by departments across the Council who will be developing alternative methods of service provision.

Management savings are being identified to reflect the commitment to reduce the levels of management in the Council.

IMPACT

The proposals in respect of Treasury Management, IT Services, Revenues and Benefits and Procurement are essentially back-office savings which deliver financial benefits without impacting upon services currently provided. The review of the procurement service is intended to commence in 2012/13 and more detailed proposals will follow.

The reduction in Management will impact upon staff but will seek to improve service delivery through reducing bureaucracy so this is intended not to adversely impact upon service delivery.

MITIGATION

As the proposals are essentially back-office savings resulting from improvements to processes or controls there will be no direct impact upon service delivery.

Actions to ensure that any benefits which are identified from reductions in management will be monitored both by the Department and corporately by the Executive Team.

OPTION: Management Restructure

To reduce the Council's management structure in a way that provides the Council with a sustainable management structure with back office support brought together to deliver improved ways of working and to realise efficiencies.

BUDGET SAVING:

£5.5 million

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION:

The review of the Council's management structure will take into consideration:

1. All those with management responsibility at principal officer grade and above.
2. The impact on remaining structures.
3. The target saving of approximately 33% of managers at PO grade and above.

The review will be completed in two stages:

1. Chief Officers, Head of Service, Senior Managers (those who report to a Head of Service), and immediate impact on remaining structure.
2. All other managers including managers at PO grade and above and immediate impact on remaining structure.

A further review will take place in 2013/14 of other management grades below PO level.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Wirral Council, (along with many other local authorities) is facing unprecedented pressure on its finances. We need to save an estimated £100 million over the next three years (2013-16). The proposals above are part of a range of measures being put forward to reduce the budget deficit, and to reduce the Council's salary costs. The Chief Executive brought a proposal to the Cabinet on 18 September 2012 to strengthen the strategic leadership for the Council as part of the Improvement programme. At that stage it was agreed that further re-structure would follow to fund the new roles of Strategic Director and also to reduce the overall management cost for the Council. To deliver this agreement, the Council will consider options to reduce the number of managers across the Council.

IMPACT

This impacts the workforce at different stages. At stages one and two above, Chief Officers, Heads of Service and senior managers (those who report to a Head of Service), and managers at PO grade and above will be affected. All of these staff have been identified as 'at risk' of redundancy as the future management restructure of the Council is considered.

MITIGATION

The management structure is being reviewed as part of a range of proposals to enable the Council to reduce its budget deficit. The management structure will be aligned to service change proposals. The restructure and its impact is being considered in stages, beginning with the most senior managers, so that the impact on the remaining structures can be considered at each stage.

OPTION:

To review the Council's current terms and conditions of employment to make financial savings

BUDGET SAVING:

1. Review of Car Mileage: £770,000
2. Review of enhancements: £2,024,170
3. Review of Policy including Disturbance Allowance, Phone Rental, Relocation Allowance: £67,204.
4. Unpaid leave: £1,500,000

Total saving: £4,361,374

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION:

The Council currently employs 4,800 people. The current salary cost is £102m. Enhancements and allowances subject to national and local conditions of service total approximately £6m per annum.

The Council is seeking to reduce those costs with the following changes:

1. To stop paying essential car user allowance and move all mileage allowance to current HRMC rate at 45p per mile.
2. To remove the enhancements for additional overtime and out of hours working for all time worked, with the exception of night working and public holidays; where public holidays will remain on time and a half and night working on time and a third.
3. Review of Policies including Disturbance Allowance, Phone Rental, Relocation Allowance.
4. To implement four days unpaid leave for an initial period of three years, after which time it will be reviewed.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Wirral Council, (along with many other local authorities) is facing unprecedented pressure on its finances. We need to save an estimated £100 million over the next three years (2013-16). The proposals above are part of a range of measures being put forward to reduce the budget deficit, and to reduce the cost of service delivery.

IMPACT

Each of the proposals above affect the Council's workforce, including contractual salary. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for all proposals, with the exception of Relocation Allowance, as this affects potential future employees.

MITIGATION

The proposals as outlined above directly impact the current terms and conditions of employment, however they do not directly put staff at risk of redundancy and produce savings the equivalent to approximately 250 jobs, and have been proposed with the aim of reducing the number of redundancies the Council may need to make.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

LAW, HR & Asset Management - Divisional Staffing Restructure & Outsourcing

The option proposes a two stage approach to the future delivery of asset management and facilities management services for the Council.

Stage 1 would be the restructure of the Asset Management Division, reducing the overall number of staff employed and rationalising the management structure. The restructure will also see the centralisation of all asset management and facilities management resources that remain in other departments.

Staffing and service changes would include the following:

- Temporary additional capacity will be provided to drive the asset disposal programme
- Increased resource will be directed to support property review, regeneration and rationalisation projects involving Council assets
- The Design Consultancy will be reduced in size to provide an 'intelligent client' approach – developing initial client briefs, developing options, supporting business case development, undertaking initial designs etc. Basic capacity in this area will be supplemented with framework agreements to deliver projects.
- Bridge maintenance and design work will be transferred to Technical Services.
- Transfer allotments to Technical Services (Parks & Countryside)
- Transfer Beechwood Recreation Centre to Leisure Services

Stage 2 would be the outsourcing of the consolidated service.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

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.

Asset Management is responsible for the repair and maintenance and the legislative compliance of Council buildings, and undertakes the design and procurement of new buildings, extensions and alterations, including works to schools. It provides assistance to the Technical Services department in respect of bridge design and refurbishments; is responsible for energy management and conservation across the Council's estate; and leads the Council's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change.

It also operates the Council's Allotments Service, with responsibility for 41 council allotment sites and some 1600 plot holders.

The services provided by the Division are not statutory services, but as long as the Council owns or is responsible for the use of land and buildings it must comply with an extensive range of property and building related legislation around the use and management of land and property. An adequately resourced and corporate service is essential for this.

There is insufficient resource available for strategic asset management planning and policy development. This means there is a risk that that effective and timely support

and advice may not be available to services and departments. Such support will be particularly important over the next few years as Council services are re-shaped.

There is a need to inject pace into property review and disposal process and provide capacity to take forward development and regeneration opportunities. Additional resource in these areas will support rationalisation and sharing of assets with partners and the voluntary, community and faith sectors. It will also support inward investment and economic development.

The Design Consultancy faces a reduced construction workload over the next few years as capital programmes shrink. At the same time some rebalancing of functions is needed to ensure that sufficient resource is available for the maintenance and improvement of the retained estate, and deliver building changes to support service modernisation and rationalisation. The provision of a bridge design service is now more appropriately located within the Highways Service.

The Council's current asset transfer programme is nearing an end, and a separate budget option proposes the transfer or closure of the remaining facilities. Beechwood Recreation Centre, although run by a JMC, operates as a recreation centre and should be managed in the portfolio of recreation centres.

Allotments were transferred into Asset Management when the Parks and Open Spaces services were to be outsourced and they had been excluded from the contract scope. In practice they fit better with parks and open spaces in terms of operational and recreational benefits.

There is a lack of benchmarking and formal value for money information for the current services. Informal contact with other authorities shows that centralisation of asset and facilities management services has been pursued elsewhere as a means of improving service and efficiency and delivering savings. Many other councils in the region have ceased to operate full in-house architectural design and construction services such as Wirral's Design Consultancy

Service restructure will be used to address some areas of known under-resourcing and a new structure would be benchmarked against comparators.

IMPACT

Consultation will be required with affected staff and with service clients as part of a whole divisional staffing reorganisation.

There may be a withdrawal from some areas of work currently undertaken for external partners, but this has yet to be assessed or discussed with those organisations. It is thought that in any event some of that work may be exposed to competition in the near future.

There are no direct implications regarding voluntary, community and faith groups. However the proposed structure includes specific resources to support community use of assets and a future asset transfer programme. This has regard to the increasing emphasis on localism and community involvement, both nationally and locally.

The proposals would result in an initial annual saving of £100,000 in staff costs from Stage 1. These savings will only be delivered with a reduction in the number of staff employed. It is expected that savings would be achieved with effect from 1 October 2013.

If the existing service is not restructured there is a risk that sufficient and appropriate asset management services will not be available to effectively support the Council's improvement and transformation, as well as ensuring that day-to-day demands are met.

Without restructure resources will be unbalanced compared to need. In particular the current Design Consultancy will be unsustainable.

MITIGATION

The whole range of asset and facilities management services is suitable for outsourcing, and many other authorities have pursued this. Key to the success of such an approach is to retain sufficient in-house 'intelligent client' resource. However, it is considered that immediate outsourcing would be premature, and that the opportunity should be considered as part of the development of a wider corporate approach.

Preparatory work on outsourcing can run in parallel with the restructure and centralisation of services. An outsourcing exercise would be expected to take around 18 months to complete

The option of continuing with the present structure and level of resources has been dismissed for the reasons outlined above as unsustainable and inefficient.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This proposal includes options for levels of service delivery on the rationalisation of 'front line' operational assets and proposes two major 'back office' facilities for vacation to save costs.

It proposes to only to retain those assets which are required for service delivery and to operate from the minimum number of buildings. Where possible services are to be co-located and share facilities.

Savings for this option is £457,800.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council owns an extensive and varied operational estate – excluding schools - from which it delivers 'front line' services and provides 'back office' support.

The recent public consultation exercise (the results of which will be reported to Cabinet on 8 November) showed that respondents strongly support a review of the Council's use of buildings to provide services from a smaller, more cost effective number of locations.

In view of the Council's current budget position staff numbers in core administrative accommodation have been reviewed to consider what additional space could be vacated – with consequent cost savings – if staff numbers were to reduce by a series of assumed levels.

The constraints of existing buildings have also been taken into account. Those constraints limit the effectiveness of the current building stock.

It is considered that one main administrative building could be vacated this is the Finance Municipal Building in Birkenhead. The building has a substantial repair and maintenance backlog. Annual cost for Municipal Building is £197,400.

In addition it is recommended that the Acre Lane facility be closed and vacated, releasing the site for disposal and redevelopment, which would in turn be expected to produce a substantial capital receipt for re-investment elsewhere.

Annual premises costs in relation to Acre Lane are £260,400 which would be saved in their entirety if the facility is not reprovided. If the Professional Excellence Centre is replaced then the new facility will carry annual premises costs, which would reduce the potential annual saving.

Disposal of Acre Lane would be expected to produce a substantial capital receipt.

In terms of overall savings, Annual premises costs in relation to Acre Lane are £260,400 which would be saved in their entirety if the facility is not reprovided. If the Professional Excellence Centre is replaced then the new facility will carry annual premises costs, which would reduce the potential annual saving.

Disposal of Acre Lane would be expected to produce a substantial capital receipt. A range of other Council owned buildings will also be reviewed with a view to adopting a similar approach to that described above.

IMPACT

The relocation of staff from both buildings would need to be considered in the context of requirements to co-locate services and departments that arise from a Council restructure. There is a risk that a suitable alternative location may not be found for the Professional Excellence Centre, in which case the service would either cease or operate in a reduced or limited form. This in turn may create risk for the quality of Children's and other services. There is a risk that the demolition of Finance Municipal Building would have a negative effect on the nearby Hamilton Square.

If the buildings are vacated and neither demolished or disposed of (or if this is delayed) they may attract anti-social behaviour and present safety and security risks. This can be mitigated by physical and on-site security measures, but these will incur significant revenue costs.

In terms of consultation, affected staff would be communicated with in the case of each building. In addition, for Acre Lane there would be a need to consult service users – especially schools – and external partners who use the facility.

Staff relocations will require IT support and investment. This has yet to be quantified.

MITIGATION

The Finance Municipal Building could be refurbished and continue in use. However given the constraints and considerations set out in the report to Cabinet on 2 February 2012 its vacation and demolition offers one of the simplest and quickest options to deliver significant annual revenue savings.

Vacation and demolition/disposal of both buildings will reduce the Council's carbon emissions.

ELECTORAL SERVICES – 4 YEARLY ELECTORAL CYCLE

The report proposes a saving option in relation to the Council moving to a 4 yearly electoral cycle rather than elections being held in thirds over a 4 year period with one year being a fallow year; elections would be held on a 4 yearly cycle where all 66 seats within the Borough are contested in one year.

A net saving of £100,000 can be realised for each of the years 2015/16 and 2016/17.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

This option would enable greater efficiencies to be achieved as it would reduce the duplication of certain costs where elections are held in thirds.

The Council has 66 elected Members who are appointed on a 4 year term. Currently local elections are held in 3 of the 4 years. At each local election one third of Members (22) stand for election – that equates to one elected member standing for election in each of the 22 wards within the Borough.

There is therefore no local election held in the fourth year of the electoral cycle. 2013/14 is a fallow local election year. Savings would be made in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

IMPACT

The elections would be more significant and require greater management as all 66 seats would be contested.

The Council has a legal obligation to run a local election, by-election and referenda under the Localism Act 2010. The Council has a legal obligation to make available to the Returning Officer such resources considered reasonable and necessary to ensure the effective running of an election.

MITIGATION

Members and the public will need to be consulted in relation to this proposal.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes a saving in relation to the budget that would ordinarily be allocated for a local election to be held in May 2013. There is no local election required in May 2013.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council each year makes budgetary provision for a local election. Given that there are no planned local elections in 2013/14, a one-off saving of £180k for 2013/14 subject to provision being provided as a contingency.

IMPACT

Although there are no planned local elections in 2013/14, there is always a risk that a by-election is required to be held. Furthermore, under the Localism Act 2010, it is possible for a 'neighbourhood referendum' to be called.

MITIGATION

Should a by-election is or neighbourhood referendum be called, a contingency budget will be required to meet such potential obligations and risks.

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OPTION: Human Resources/Organisational Development/Payroll services

BUDGET SAVING: Total cost of the service £2.9m

Payroll/ Employee Schools SLA £750k

SLA Schools HR Service £400K

Total Schools SLA £1.15M

Net budget £1.75k

30 % savings £585K

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

To reduce the number of HR/OD/payroll staff.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

To reduce the overheads and running costs of the Council by reducing the cost of the HR/OD service. The HR, OD and Payroll services provide a range of strategic and support services for the Council, managers and employees. As the organisation reduces its numbers the support services need to be reviewed.

IMPACT

This has an immediate potential impact. This saving will reduce the numbers of HR/OD and Payroll managers and staff. In supporting the Council through transition, workforce change and the improvement agenda, there will be significantly less capacity.

MITIGATION

A transition plan will need to be drawn up to be able to deliver the change required across the Council and workforce.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes a review and restructure of Legal services, including fundamental changes to improve the service and restore confidence in corporate governance.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

There is a need to undertake a comprehensive review of systems, arrangements and practices (which have not been reviewed for some time).

The Legal and Member Services Section provides 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.

A review and restructure of Legal Services will enable high quality services to be provided as required and importantly ensure greater economies of scale are achieved, efficiency improved and resilience strengthened. It is essential that Legal Services provides value for money, particularly in relation to the use of external legal support.

Proposal

Through the introduction of:

- performance management;
- reducing reliance on locums and fixed term staff;
- introduction of QA;
- case management;
- control of external cost including use of framework contracts;
- a complete restructure around professional competencies and business needs;
- repatriation in-house of legal work through more efficient working;
- exploring partnership with other authorities.

The net effect will be massively improved customer experience and improved quality of service and advice, restoring confidence in the corporate centre.

Undertaking a review and restructure of Legal Services will involve the rationalisation/review of posts.

Additional savings would be realised through improved working practices and staff reconfiguration that reduces the reliance upon external legal support and assistance. A saving of £300k can be achieved by doing so in 2013/14.

Further savings of £300k could be achieved in 2014/15 by adopting similar approach.

There will be a need to invest in certain posts to achieve the objectives/savings outlined

IMPACT

Legal Services needs to provide key support to the body corporate. The Council has been criticised for poor governance and it is imperative that Legal Services provides appropriate support and assistance to the Council to ensure that it conducts itself lawfully, appropriately and effectively.

Proposed changes would require consultation with all staff within Legal Services. Undertaking a review and restructure of Legal Services will require posts to be rationalised.

In terms of legal implications, Council departments are reliant upon the services provided by the Section. Any review and restructure will have regard to the Council's legal obligations and the needs of the departments.

MITIGATION

The proposals as outlined above directly impact staff. Alternative working practices and methods will be explored to mitigate the human resources implications

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This Option proposes a review and restructure of committee/civic/electoral/member services (which form part of legal & member services) in order to ensure an efficient, effective service providing high quality services and value for money and reducing the cost of democracy.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

By introducing resilience, economies of scale and cross fertilisation of knowledge and experience, the proposed review and restructure will add significantly more value, and help restore confidence, in the corporate governance agenda.

The Council currently operates a model of governance known as Strong Leader, which involves a Cabinet and five Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Programme Board, together with a number of other committees.

IMPACT

The review of the Constitution and number of Committees will promote confidence and transparent decision making; improve democratic arrangements, whilst reducing the costs of democracy; and ensure greater accountability and efficiencies.

Undertaking a review and restructure of the Services in question will involve the rationalisation/review of posts. This could realise savings of £100,000.

The review of the Constitution and the number of Committee Meetings will enable greater efficiencies to be achieved through improved working practices/arrangements and rationalisation/review of posts. This would lead to a further saving of £75,000.

MITIGATION

Consultation will therefore be required with all relevant staff and members.

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DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

Revise the Mayoralty function to better define the role of the Mayoralty so that in future the time commitment and resources available are matched to an agreed programme supporting the council objectives.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Civic Services is the staff and associated budget which support the Mayoralty. The service employees 3.5 staff and has a budget of £212k. This budget is insufficient to meet all the demands of the Mayoralty (which are principally determined by the Mayor him/herself).

In order to provide reliance and economies of scale it is suggested this is brought within a revised leaner Democratic Services structure with explicit lines of accountability.

In order to make savings, 33% of the current £20k overtime budget is to be reduced to show political solidarity with budget issues.

IMPACT

To leave the situation as it is will generate public perception that it is a nice “to have” which is left untouched because it is a political enthusiasm.

Consultation will be required with Members of the Council. The public react positively to the Mayoralty and therefore consultation with the public is necessary.

The level of Attendant /Chauffeur support was reduced to meet the demands placed on the service. Additional resources were therefore required leading to the overspend on the budget.

MITIGATION

An alternative to how the service could be delivered differently is to adjust the financial budget to ensure sufficient funds are made available to cover all the activities of the Mayoralty (and avoid overspend).

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OPTION: Transforming Business Support

BUDGET SAVING:

2013/14 £0.5m

2014/15 £1.0m

2015.16 £1.0m

The projected savings for 2014/15 onwards will need to be reviewed further once the total cost of administration is determined to anticipate the potential savings.

Savings are scheduled for six months of 2013/14. This is due to the capacity to deliver the move to Business Administration Units before 1 April 2013/14.

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This proposal seeks to bring together administration across the Council into three business units to support each strategic area. This will be supported by the rollout of HR self serve technology. The business units will also pick up other areas of administration to re – structure the work and to achieve economies of scale. The saving relates directly to staff who carry out administration across the Council.

Business Administration Units (BAU)

The introduction of three BAU's will deliver standard procedures across the Council for back office support processes resulting in improved use of technology and delivering efficiencies. Reviews will cover the following areas (not exhaustive)

Postal Service

Secretarial support

Procurement

Invoices

Photocopying / printing / scanning

HR related admin (e.g. M44, Timesheets, Occupational Health referrals)

Reception cover

Advertising

Travel and subsistence

Petty cash

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Council needs to reduce its running costs and to look at ways of organising administration differently. The purpose of this project is to streamline processes and improve the efficiency of back office support for the Council so that

- Processes are lean
- Costs are reduced
- The potential of technology is maximised
- Managers and staff are empowered through improved management information

This will be achieved through the continued implementation of HR self serve and the establishment of 3 Business Administration Units, one in each Executive Directorate

IMPACT

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

MITIGATION

This will be supported by the rollout of the self serve system; the modules on leave management, expenses and reporting are currently being tested. Further modules will release further capacity across the organisation. All processes above will be reviewed to create efficiency

OPTION: LIBRARIES AND ONE STOP SHOPS

BUDGET SAVING: £629,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option is regarding potential savings options in relation to the Council's range of One Stop Shop and Library sites through a range of changes to the service.

The options involved in this area include:

- **Further merging of existing library and one stop shop sites, which bring savings in terms of reducing the number of staff which are required**
- **Options regarding reducing opening hours particularly around Christmas and New Year**
- **Reducing the book fund which is currently allocated on an annual basis to Libraries.**

This option would also involve encouraging volunteers to take a greater role in Library services, and to further investigate and explore the possibility of community asset transfer for some sites.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Merging of Libraries and One Stop Shops

Budget Saving: £400,000

This proposal represents the likely savings that will be achieved via the current programme of merging One Stop Shops and Libraries. This builds on the sum already within the 2012/13 savings programme of £200k.

The sites offering wider service availability will be more attractive as a local community hub and focal point for services and allow other agencies, organisations to utilise and support the facilities.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

Budget Saving: £90,000

A one off saving of £90k, achieved via savings in cost of buildings and overall the need for staff at this time. This would be via reduced hours or total staff in service. This proposal can be independent or complimentary to the above option regarding merging sites and may be affected by the wider proposals on staffing terms and conditions

Reduction of the Book Fund

This proposal would involve the Book Fund, which is allocated to libraries on an annual basis, being reduced by £139,000.

IMPACT

Merging of Libraries and One Stop Shops

This merger widens the function of sites, which will to a degree reduce staffing at merged sites. This would see a number of actual sites merge to reduce the total

number of sites, reducing buildings occupied and maximising use of sites. There is a requirement to improve some of the joint buildings which could only be financed by reserves to the level available.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

This proposal requires consultation with users and partners and is unlikely to affect our statutory responsibility for providing an efficient and comprehensive library service. The staffing implications are that each site would be closed during this period with a single One Stop Shop maintained for emergency contact and this would allow the reduced staffing resources easier deployment through the rest of the year

MITIGATION

Library One Stop Shop operating arrangements via merger and re-provision

Aligned to this would be the ongoing work already underway to maximise the effective use of volunteers, partner organisations and local community to support and complement the service available. This proposal requires consultation with users and partners and is unlikely to affect our statutory responsibility for providing an efficient and comprehensive library service. The staffing implications are that as each site is merged there is potential savings and within these proposals would see an overall reduction of six full time employees in each year.

Library & OSS reduced hours (Christmas & New Year)

The proposal is to close Library and One Stop sites between Christmas and New Year. This is reducing the service, but at a time when usage is well below the norm in any case and some level of contact service would still be maintained.

OPTION: REVENUES AND BENEFITS

BUDGET SAVING: £VARIABLE DEPENDENT ON OPTION

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Revenues & Benefits Service encompasses Council tax, National Non Domestic Rates, Accounts Receivable, Council Tax & Housing Benefits, Education Welfare Benefits and Personal Finance Unit. The following areas have proposed changes: revenues and benefits staff savings, increases in court costs, reductions and changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions, Council Tax pensioner discount, localised Council Tax support scheme, National non-domestic rates discretionary rate relief support.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Revenues and Benefits staffing savings

Budget saving: £550k.

These are the savings that will begin to occur with the overall impact of Welfare Reform and Universal Credit and are part of the changes to the division as a whole. This will see posts rationalised and the number of permanent staff affected will be minimised.

IMPACT

As Welfare Reform cuts are felt by recipients they will turn for support and advice to partners and the voluntary sector as well as from the expertise of the Council. Council services wider than this division will be adversely affected by the overall cuts such as adult and children's services and housing services.

Over the first twelve months workload in Revenues and Benefits will increase before any reduction is seen in back office processing requirements. That is predicated on the government remaining to their current timetable of Universal Credit introduction and any slippage will see that reduction delayed.

Any further staff reductions will lead to service degradation and impact on the low income households (over 43,000) who depend on the service. 2013-14 will also see the delivery of Single Fraud Investigation Service and planning for Universal Credit will be ongoing which requires significant expertise from within the service.

MITIGATION

Further savings are expected to be generated as staffing levels reduce to reflect new arrangements although this will be largely offset by reduction in DWP Administration grant which will start in 2013/14 and go through to Universal Credit full implementation in 2017.

Revenues court cost increases

Budget saving: £1.197m

This proposal is an increase in the net income from increasing court costs (summons and liability orders) from the current amount of £65 to £75 in respect of Council Tax & NNDR. This is still below actual costs which are calculated as £87. The local Magistrates Court must ratify the costs we can be awarded. Current Fees are Summons £43, Liability Order £23, total £66. Last Year 14,479 summonses and 10,202 Liability Orders were awarded. Given the changes anticipated to Council tax charges there could be 10,000 additional Summonses and 7,000 additional Liability Orders. Budget can be total charged or total estimated to be collected

Members can consider increasing the charges to £85 which changes bad debt / uncollectable levels and gives a maximum income of £2.4m.

The sum is based on the increase in clients and caseloads and it is acknowledged that the section will face increased contact volumes and within the proposal is the necessary staffing increase of three full time employees which would be proposed to be temporary to align this with the later impact of welfare reform. The staff would handle the consequential increase in changes, payment, and recovery action, write off and contacts via various access channels.

IMPACT

Increasing charges even for court costs for non payers will be unpopular and coupled with the changes to Council Tax Benefit the number of summons issued for £100 or less are likely to substantially increase. Current legislation dictates that a Liability Order (and costs) must be issued prior to Benefit Deduction which is a likely recovery method for low income debts. The cost for a summons / liability order is the same despite the size of the debt.

MITIGATION

The Council would have to consider how it mitigates being potentially seen to be adding to problems of the new debtors by nearly doubling indebtedness, adding to the spiral of debt but this would be offset by the increases offering encouragement to contact before a court debt accrues. There will also be a consequential increase in Write Offs as many debts may become uneconomic to pursue and an estimate of this is included in calculating the net figure.

The equality implications will be mainly focused on being low income who will all feel an adverse impact and is a measure following a change to central government policy.

Reductions and changes to Council Tax Discounts and Exemptions levels

There are a range changes to the levels of discounts and exemptions that would allow the authority to raise more income from Council Tax. These would be applicable in the year and below is set out each potential amendment the number of people or properties it would impact and the income likely to be raised. Second Homes currently receive a 25% discount and this could be altered to a percentage below that or removed altogether. There are 1081 properties currently in this category. A reduction to 10% would raise £122k, a 10% discount £122k whilst a nil discount would raise £201k

Class L is mortgagors in possession that currently receive full exemption and this could be changed to another discount level including none. There are 147 properties currently in this category. Moving to 50% discount would raise net £35k, 25% £51.5k while no discount would raise £68k.

IMPACT

Class A – is properties undergoing major repair. Currently they receive a maximum exemption of 100% for 12 months. A Local discount may now be awarded to any level including no discount – full charge. Members previously indicated they would like to retain this discount in its current form. There are 326 properties currently in this category Figures shown are at 50% and no discounts and are net figures including likely levels of bad debt. This would be £81.3k at 50%, at 25% £122k and £161.8k with no discount.

Class C – are Long Term Empty exemptions which currently grants a 6 month exempt period on empty properties. There are 3616 properties currently in this category including 700 which could be subject to a premium charge having been empty for more than two years. The proposal is to abolish the exemption and allow the Council to define a discount, if any for the period. This would raise £1.8m per year.

This will be an additional charge on Social and Private Landlords and could positively help by encouraging them wherever possible to reduce occupancy turnaround time to limit the charge. Overall though the increased charge would be unpopular and more difficult to collect hence a larger than normal Bad Debt provision would be required and overall this would have a negative impact on collection performance.

IMPACT

Members were previously concerned that this could be seen as discouraging property renovation and against the council's aim of bringing empty properties back into use and stopping them becoming a blight on the area. This has to be

balanced against the potential income raised and what they may be used to protect.

Staffing wise this would see change our work but the current 1.5 full time employees would still be required but their duties of what they inspect may alter. There will be a negative impact on executors managing estates as was evidenced by the removal of 50% long term empty discount in April 2011. This would also increase likelihood of attempted avoidance with properties being claimed as furnished and no ones main residence (Class B) claiming a 25% Discount or occupied with a 25% discount.

MITIGATION

Substantial savings and increases in income are related to this area with limited or no impact on either front line services or vulnerable people.

Council Tax Pensioner Discount for household over 70 years of age reduction or amendment of qualifying criteria

Wirral pensioner households over 70 years of age currently receive a discretionary non-means tested discount of 7.76% against heir Council tax liability unless they are eligible for full Council tax Benefits support. This is to maintain the Council Tax level at 2006-07 levels and protects them against council tax increases.

As an example with such discount at Band D discount of £164.58 is given on a full charge of £1,471.18. This is not payable to recipients of CTB.

IMPACT

Complete withdrawal would produce £1.3m savings, meanwhile other alternatives could include:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| ▪ Limiting awards by Council tax Band (A & B) | £917k |
| ▪ Limiting awards by Council tax Band (A to C) | £594k |
| ▪ Limiting awards by Council tax Band (A to D) | £404k |
| ▪ Increasing the qualifying age to 85 | £395k |
| ▪ Increasing the qualifying age to 80 | £271k |

MITIGATION

Wirral is one of only a handful of authorities in the country giving a significant sum from its own budget in localised support. The total cost is £1.3m which is

awarded to 13,315 households and removal, reduction or amendment of criteria of this award would produce savings.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for those on low income reduction in level of support

With effect from 1 April 2013 the Government is replacing the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme with a Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, accompanying that change is a 10% reduction in the amount paid to the authority and its preceptors. For Wirral this is approximately £3.2m.

It should be noted that the ongoing increase in claimant numbers (about 1% per year) is not covered by additional grant and falls to the Council to fund. Wirral has proposed the following changes from the current Council tax Benefits scheme to its Localised Scheme in an attempt to show where the funding shortfall from Central Government will be met from its tax payers.

Detailed below are the options.

- If the new scheme has a maximum 80% payments limit.
- If the Second Adult Rebate is abolished.
- If the Capital limit is reduced from £16,000 to £6,000.
- If one Standard Non Dependant Deduction at £9.90 is introduced.
If no backdating is awarded £58k

This gives a total of £3.465m however this needs to be offset by the contingency for increased claims next year, a small hardship fund to support exceptional cases. This would give a net increase of £3.03m.

IMPACT

There is a major implication on tax payers as well as partners and the voluntary sector which reflects the need for the service consultation that has taken place. The scheme will be charging Working Age low paid Council Tax, in many cases for the first time. Agencies offering welfare advice and debt services will see an increase in general advice and support requirements as will our own expert front of house access channels

Council Tax arrears are likely to increase as will levels of Write Offs with over 20,000 new small debts of less than £200 per year having to be collected and potentially taken through the courts. The key impact on service delivery will be billing and collection of new accounts. Benefits service delivery will be heavily impacted on delivering what is an alternative benefits system, monitoring its progress and planning for changes for 2014-15 which are anticipated to be required from an initial year scheme.

Other significant changes to Housing Benefits, as part of the Welfare Reform programme, are being introduced in 2013-14 as will the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service and planning for Universal Credit will be ongoing reflecting the largest change to welfare in many years and the most significant impacts on the councils work in this field for over twenty years.

There are equality implications especially to those on low incomes. The service has just concluded its consultation on vulnerable group definition. Adverse financial impacts will be felt by all apart from pensionable age and those defined as vulnerable and this is likely to see implication for other council services that deal with those on low income and those with housing needs and support.

MITIGATION

With regard to staffing implications; despite these changes and the increased work load it will bring we do not anticipate a requirements for additional staff and that the current structure will be maintained until more effects of Welfare Reform are clear.

Each Council has to decide whether to fund this or introduce a scheme to pass the charge on to Council Tax payers who have previously benefited from full support under Council tax Benefit. This is subject to recent consultation and a report will be submitted to Cabinet later this year. Pensioners are protected and we are consulting on our definition of vulnerable groups to be used.

National Non Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Reduction

Wirral paid Discretionary Business Rate relief £1,008,661 to charities voluntary social, educational and sporting organisations. This is split in two elements: charities awarded fully funded mandatory relief can receive top up relief (the remaining 20%) which Wirral funds 25% of £871,233 awarded which is £217,808.

Those organisations only eligible for discretionary relief get 100% relief and Wirral funds 75% of the £137,428 awarded, costing £103,071. The total Wirral cost is currently £321,000. There are some 550 organisations which benefit from these awards.

IMPACT

Each authority can propose, after giving twelve months notice, to remove some or all of these awards. Any savings this would generate would not be applicable to 2013-14.

The maximum savings would be £321,000, albeit there could be a number of exceptions members may wish to decide on but each would reduce the overall savings available.

The implication is that some of the smaller clubs and associations may disband without this funding given the additional costs. The quality implication would be mainly around the loss of such clubs and organisations in the borough and their loss may proportionately fall on the members of the community who are within one of the equality strands

MITIGATION

Wirral has since the introduction of business rates been positive in its use of this relief to support these types of organisation and the majority of voluntary organisations are in receipt of this. There is no staffing impact in this change but there would be an increase in non payment given clubs have not previously paid would find it hard to meet their liabilities.

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