

COUNCIL

Monday, 1 March 2021

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Tony Smith) in the
Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor George Davies)

Councillors	T Anderson	EA Grey	T Norbury
	B Berry	P Hayes	C Povall
	J Bird	S Hayes	L Rennie
	A Brame	A Hodson	J Robinson
	D Burgess-Joyce	K Hodson	L Rowlands
	H Cameron	J Johnson	C Spriggs
	K Cannon	AER Jones	S Spoor
	C Carubia	C Jones	J Stapleton
	P Cleary	S Jones	P Stuart
	W Clements	T Jones	M Sullivan
	M Collins	M Jordan	T Usher
	C Cooke	S Kelly	J Walsh
	T Cottier	B Kenny	S Whittingham
	T Cox	A Leech	I Williams
	S Foulkes	I Lewis	KJ Williams
	S Frost	M McLaughlin	S Williams
	A Gardner	J McManus	J Williamson
	P Gilchrist	D Mitchell	G Wood
	K Greaney	C Muspratt	A Wright
	JE Green	Y Nolan	

Apologies Councillors A Corkhill

54 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Civic Mayor informed the meeting that he had been informed in advance of a number of Members who had a personal interest in agenda item 4c, 'Budget 2021/22 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2022/23 - 2025/26' insofar as it related to the schools budget element by virtue of holding positions as school governors, as follows:

Councillors Bruce Berry, Allan Brame, Chris Carubia, Pat Cleary, Wendy Clements (who was also employed in an early-years setting) Mike Collins, Chris Cooke, George Davies, Andrew Gardner, Phil Gilchrist, Karl Greaney, Brian Kenny, Anita Leech, Dave Mitchell, Tony Smith, Paul Stuart, Mike Sullivan, Stuart Whittingham and Steve Williams.

Additionally, the Civic Mayor reported the following personal interests insofar as they related to the schools budget element, by virtue of those Members either themselves or close family members working in either Schools or the Council's Education and Children, or Young People's Directorate:

Councillors Chris Cooke (employed as teacher) George Davies (daughter in education) Jean Robinson (employed in Early Years) and (son, supply teacher) Les Rowlands (spouse) Paul Stuart (foster carer) and Mike Sullivan (daughter).

The Civic Mayor further reported that the Constitution & Standards Committee at its meeting on 24 February, 2021 had granted a dispensation to Councillor Steve Foulkes in respect to Magenta Housing as he was a Board Member, so as to enable him to participate fully in the budget debate.

Members of the Council were then invited to consider whether they had any further disclosable pecuniary and / or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the interest.

In respect of agenda item 4c, 'Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 - 2025/26' insofar as it related to the schools budget element, the following Members declared personal interests:

Councillors Adrian Jones (school governor) and (daughter, teacher) Joe Walsh (daughter, teacher), Julie McManus (school governor) and (son in Primary Education) Mike Collins (employment) Yvonne Nolan (school governor) Steve Foulkes (school governor) Chris Jones (daughter, teacher) Samantha Frost (family member in education) Tony Norbury (school governor and voting member of Schools Forum) and (sister works in early years) Sarah Spoor (employment in Liverpool school) Chris Spriggs (partner in education) Jo Bird (partner school governor) Christina Muspratt (daughter-in-law, teacher).

In respect of agenda item 4c, 'Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 - 2025/26' insofar as it mentioned Wirral Evolutions, Councillor Irene Williams declared a personal interest by virtue of her brother being a service user.

In respect of agenda item 4d, 'Capital Programme 2021-26' Councillor Anita Leech declared a personal interest by virtue her being a governor of two schools referred to in the report.

55 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies had been received from Councillor Andy Corkhill.

He then welcomed back a number of Members who had been unwell since the last meeting. Referring to the fact that it was now almost a year since the first lockdown, he expressed his thanks to all staff, the NHS and volunteers for all their work in the past difficult year. There was now hope on the horizon with the rollout of the vaccine, which both he and the Mayoress had now received. With the focus on Wirral being to keep people safe, there was also a need to recognise the challenges faced by residents and to support their mental, physical and economic wellbeing. Additionally with regard to recovery there would be a need to help those affected by the pandemic, particularly young people, many of whom had struggled with mental health issues. Local Authorities and the NHS would remain on the frontline in the battle against COVID.

56 **BUDGET MEETING PROCEDURE**

The Council was then invited to consider the recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 17 February 2021, in respect of the procedure to be adopted for this extraordinary meeting of the Council.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was –

Resolved – That, for the duration of this extraordinary meeting of 1 March 2021 (Budget Council):

- (a) the procedure attached as Appendix A to the report, be followed in respect of the meeting; and**
- (b) Council Standing Order 15.4 (timing of speeches) be suspended together with such other standing orders as may conflict with the Budget Council procedure or the Mayor’s administration of the meeting, in such a manner as the Mayor in his or her absolute discretion dictates, to ensure the objective of Council setting a lawful budget and council tax requirement prevails.**

57 **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL - RECOMMENDATION FROM POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF 17 FEBRUARY, 2021 CONCERNING BUDGET DECISION MAKING**

With regard to Budget decision making, seven referrals had been made by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 17 February (see minutes 58 to 64 post).

58 **REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE 2020/21**

The first item requiring approval was in relation to an increase in the budget because of Covid-19 funding.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 66 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed, in that:

Council approves the 2020/21 budget of £41.144m in relation to Covid-19 funding for Council use and notes the additional £134.490m of funds that is to be made available to the Council for onward relay to other organisations as passported funding. Council notes that this recommendation follows on from the recommendation made by Policy & Resources Committee on 11 November 2020, following the recent notification of additional funding.

59 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER THREE 2020/21**

The second item requiring approval was in relation to a revised capital programme for 2020/21.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 67 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed in that the following be approved:

- (1) additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.5 in the report, as follows:**
 - **Birkenhead Park World Heritage Project Team - £0.085m (over a three year period)**
 - **Connecting Wirral Waters - Detailed Design - £0.610m (over a two year period)**

- (2) a revised Capital Programme of £86.0million for 2020-21, including the virements referred to in Appendix 3 in the report.**

BUDGET 2021/22 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2022/23 - 2025/26

The third item requiring approval was the Council Budget and Council Tax setting. Councillor Janette Williamson moved and then spoke to the Motion, which was seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, and which was set out as a recommendation of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February 2021 (Draft Minute 68-2020/21) 'Budget 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 – 2025/26' but subject to an alteration, as follows:

'That is, that the Motion being proposed remains to adopt a revenue budget of £329.4m, but is altered to accept the amendments from other Groups, in parts, and to make a minor addition:

(1) The following *are deleted*:

1. *Accepting items (1)2 of the Green Group's amendment and (1)5 of the Conservative Group's amendment, Savings proposal № 30*
 "Charging for a range of new and existing Environmental: Services" **£144,000**
2. *Accepting item (1)6 of the Conservative Group's amendment and (2)2 in part of the Green Group's amendment, Savings proposal № 36*
 "Climate Emergency Budget Balance: **£100,000**

(2) *Accepting in part the item (2)1 of the Conservative Group's amendment,:*

1. Savings proposal № 16
 "Suspension of individual Member Ward Budgets: £250,000" *now reads:*
"Mitigate ward member budget pause and allocate £1,000 per Member (£66,000) to support local voluntary organisations and initiatives: £184,000"

(3) The following be inserted, after the list of budget savings proposals at B(2), to read:

"That further budget allocation be provided for the following:

1. *Accepting the item (3)1 of the Conservative Group's amendment and item (2) of the Liberal Democrat Group's amendment*
To enable development of the wider youth offer in £200,000

Wirral:

- (3) The budget gap of £510,000 that would thereby be created is then met, retaining a balanced budget of £329.4m, by

Insertion of the following budget savings proposals:

1. *Accepting the item (4)3 of the Conservative Group's amendment*

Remove the Brexit Reserve:

£100,000

Included within the earmarked reserves is a reserve of £100k for activities associated with Brexit. We recognise that the funding received for Brexit from Government was ring-fenced, however we believe that this reserve could be charged against salaries and activities undertaken during 2020/21 that have been charged against core council budgets and that therefore this would release £100k that can be made available for other purposes.

2. *Accepting the item (3) of the Green Group's amendment*

£240K

Filling Staff Vacancies:

To support staff vacancies should be filled in a timely manner, to reduce pressures on our existing staff. To achieve this council assumes that vacancies are filled at the top of the pay scale which is rare. It is therefore deemed prudent to reduce this to half of the potential £480k.

3. *Accepting in part the item (4)1 of the Conservative Group's amendment*

Zero Based Budgeting:

£170k

In 2020/221 a saving was agreed at full Council of £600k from this exercise. The saving has not been achieved and is recommended to be removed in full, from the 2021/22 budget. We believe a small proportion of these savings can still be achieved.

- (4) A new paragraph (3)(g)(iii) is inserted, *to read:*

- (iii) **in implementing the proposals Council requests that the Europa Fun Pool re-opens, when its practicable and safe to so in line with government and public health guidance, during the School Summer holidays."**

In stating this request, Council notes that:

- **Unknown intelligence relating to the COVID situation and what that will look like on / post 21 June 2021 and the**

‘previous advice given by the Director of Public Health in that the fun pool would not be able to open under current restrictions’.

- **There is currently no guidance on what a “safe” number of people would be.**
- **To open the Europa Fun Pool would require a recruitment exercise for additional staffing and supported lifeguard training which would be challenging to undertake between 22 June and the start of the summer holidays, given that the Lifeguard Training takes a minimum of 5 weeks.**
- **The following current guidance has been released in relation to events and large gatherings, which would need to be kept under review. The maximum Europa Fun Pool capacity could be considered as similar to a large wedding every 1.5 hours *“DCMS and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have been working with representatives from industry and civil society to explore when and how events with larger crowd sizes, less social distancing or in settings where transmission is more likely (i.e. indoors), will be able to return safely. This includes sports events, music festivals and large weddings and conferences.”***
- **That a reduction in numbers to what might be considered a safe level could be considered, given this is a much-used facility during the School Summer holidays.” ’**

Councillor Wendy Clements, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, then spoke to the Schools Budget element of the proposed budget.

CONSERVATIVE GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT

Councillor Jeff Green then moved and spoke to the Conservative amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie, as follows:

‘We recommend Council accepts the Policy and Resources Committee Revenue Budget of £329.4 million, building on the Leader of the Council’s Policy & Resources Committee proposal to Council, with the following improvements.

Council notes that in March 2020 the Council agreed a budget of £304.7 million for 2020/21 and that this amendment delivers a budget of £329.4

million for 2021/22 and does not alter the Policy & Resources Committee proposed Council Tax requirement.

That the motion being proposed to adopt a Revenue Budget of £329.4m is amended, so as:

(1) The following Labour Party proposals for savings *are deleted*:

1. Savings proposal № 5
"Reduction in grass cutting and maintenance of roadside verges and all Parks and Open Spaces: **£250,000**"
2. Savings proposal № 6.
"Amenity space and grass verge maintenance cessation: **£100,000**"
3. Savings proposal № 11
"Royden Park Commercial Development – Phase 1: **£80,000**"
4. Savings proposal № 27
"Savings from efficiencies at the Williamson Art Gallery: **£90,000**"
5. Savings proposal № 30
"Charging for a range of new and existing Environmental: Services" **£144,000**"
6. Savings proposal № 36
"Climate Emergency Budget Balance: **£100,000**"

(2) The following:

1. Savings proposal № 16
"Suspension of individual Member Ward Budgets: £250,000" *now reads:*

"Mitigate ward member budget pause and allocate £3000 per Member (£198,000) to support local voluntary organisations and initiatives: **£52,000"**

(3) The following be inserted, after the list of budget savings proposals at B(2), to read:

"That further budget allocation be provided for the following:

1. **Additional Youth Service Provision at multiple sites around the Borough: **£200,000****

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| 2. | Remove all the proposed increases in fees and charges associated with Cemeteries and Crematoria: | £230,000 |
| 3. | Retain and, following public engagement, review grass cutting and maintenance of verges and amenity spaces. Review and, if necessary, restructure Team and processes: | £50,000 |
| 4. | ‘Planting for Pollinators’ and community allotments (in consultation with public and ward councillors): | £100,000 |
| 5. | Rebuilding Council reserves and balances: | £588,000 |
- (4) The budget gap of £2,130,000 that would thereby be created is then met, retaining a balanced budget of £329.4m by

Insertion of the following budget savings proposals:

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| 1. | “Zero-based budgeting: | £300,000 |
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In 2020/21 a saving was agreed at Full Council of £600k from Zero Based Budgeting exercise. This saving has not been achieved and is recommended to be removed in 2021/22. We believe that some of this saving is still achievable in 2021/22 and that the full pressure should not be removed. We recognise that officers are still working to support the pandemic and that there is less capacity, so we recommend that the exercise is phased. We think that half of this saving of £300k would be achievable in 2021/22.

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| “2. | “Business Change Team (Non-staffing): | £500,000 |
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The change programme has not yet been agreed, it is not yet known what this budget will be used for in 2021/22, so it cannot be verified whether this remaining value will be required. Therefore, we consider that an additional £500,000 can be made available for other purposes. This leaves a remaining annual non-staffing budget of £1.73m. In developing and implementing change projects, these projects should be scoped out in advance and the full cost of development and implementation taken into account when the benefits are calculated, and then only the net benefits included within any future budgets.

All Change Projects must be fully costed and budgeted with any overspends reported to a joint Officer Member Panel with the request to access centrally held reserves. Business Change professionals and Change Managers to become an internally Traded Service to future projects and

programmes.

3. **“Remove the Brexit Reserve: £100,000**

Included within the earmarked reserves is a reserve of £100k for activities associated with Brexit. We recognise that the funding received for Brexit from Government was ring-fenced, however we believe that this reserve could be charged against salaries and activities undertaken during 2020/21 that have been charged against core council budgets and that therefore this would release £100k that can be made available for other purposes

4. **“Fund increased 21/22 requirement for Cemeteries and Crematoria from Government Covid Grant: £230,000**

The 2021/22 fees and charges schedule includes details of increases of fees and charges in crematoria. Some of these charges are significant and we recognise that in response to the pandemic, the way cremations are conducted and attended has changed. We understand that costs have increased as a result of this different way of operation, but we feel that these costs can be charged against the Covid-19 Emergency Funding provided by the Government for 2021/22, rather than increasing the charges for the public to cover them.

5. **“Bring forward new Council Model: £1,000,000**

In 2020/21 a saving was agreed at Full Council of £5 million for the new Council Model. This saving has not been achieved and is recommended to be removed in 2021/22. We believe that some of this saving is still achievable in 2021/22 and that the full pressure should not be removed. We recognise that officers are still working to support the pandemic and that there is less capacity, so we recommend that £1 million is removed from this pressure and that Officers be authorised to utilise the EVR Reserve and / or any vacancies no longer required to support this initiative, if required.”

(5) A new paragraph at (3) is inserted, to read:

“h) Recommends to Policy and Resources Committee and Policy and Services Committees, to support the delivery of the 2021/22 budget and formulation of the 2022/23 budget, that:

(i) Carbon Net Zero Impact is introduced as a new criteria for awarding future contracts

The Committees note that in the current mechanism for awarding contracts includes criteria for quality, price and social value, no account is taken for a carbon net zero impact. As the Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019, Council believes that any contracts the Council awards from 2021/22 need to be assessed for their carbon net zero impact to contribute to the Council's Climate Emergency declaration and therefore recommends that officers are tasked with bringing forward proposals for amending the requirements for contracts so that the carbon net zero impact is included as part of the criteria for award.

(ii) A Joint Member Officer Business Change Panel is established

To establish a joint officer/member panel to monitor the performance of major change projects/programmes and to consider any overspends (over agreed contingency levels set out in business case) to change projects.

(iii) A 2022/2023 Budget Preparation Panel is established

To establish a Panel (working group) immediately following agreement of the 2021/22 Budget by Council, to commence detailed work in preparation for the 2022/23 budget cycle. The membership of the Panel to be agreed by Group Leaders." '

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP AMENDMENT

Councillor Phil Gilchrist then moved and spoke to the Liberal Democrat amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, as follows:

'That the motion being proposed to adopt a Revenue Budget of £329.4m is amended so that:

(1) A budget savings proposal is inserted as:

**"Budgeting at cost for newly recruited posts:
£100,000"**

(2) The following be inserted, after the list of budget savings proposals at B(2), to read:

"That further budget allocation be provided for the following:

"1. Accepting the monies discussed as now being available for this item with the other Groups,

increasing this amount:

“To enable development of the wider Youth Offer in Wirral: £200,000

Council, in December 2015, was quite clear that the major project...*‘should not detract from the pattern of hubs established some years ago’* and that Council is *‘...absolutely clear that this development will enhance the Borough’s existing youth service and will not replace it’*. Council therefore expects that the further funding allocated to the ‘The Hive’ as an organisation, along with the funding expected from businesses as suggested, will enable that organisation to honour the original arrangements from the year 2022 going forward.

In implementing the budget provision, Council asks that the Children, Young People and Education Committee:

- (i) takes up and progresses the Youth Offer;
- (ii) works to build a consensus on the range of services needed for young people, their wide distribution and staffing levels; and
- (iii) works with Officers to look at virement within appropriate budgets and every opportunity for external funding;

with the express purpose of securing a youth offer that meets the needs of young people throughout Wirral.”

- (3) A new paragraph (3)(g)(ii) is inserted, moving the existing (ii) to become (iii), to read:

“(ii) That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, in developing and implementing proposals in line with the agreed Budget as authorised at (g)(i)(3) above, take into account that Council:

- (1) has supported a new approach to ‘Verges and Pollinators’, which was a Motion (46-2019/20) passed, as amended, unanimously in July 2019;
- (2) believes clear guidance is needed to define the most effective approach;

- (3) notes that Oxton Fields, The Dips (New Brighton) and Carr Bridge Road (Woodchurch Road) were initially included in the budget option for 'maintenance cessation' by mistake which, as reported to Policy & Resources Committee, were areas subsequently transferred to budget option 'maintenance reduction'; and
- (4) believes before any change in maintenance and grass cutting is introduced within any of the green space amenity areas listed in recent documents, there needs to be substantial consultation with local Ward Members and the community. This must ensure that any changes take account of the need for local recreation and play alongside appropriate environmentally sustainable bee and insect friendly rewilding and planting along with any potential for increased tree cover.
- (5) A programme of work to reduce adverse public reaction is likely to secure this as a project with transformational and environmental benefits.
Without appropriate planning and thorough consultation there is every possibility of delay in the arrangements making those savings from parks and verges less realistic.
In the event of the program slipping members should be advised at the earliest opportunity so that any financial considerations can be suitably assessed

(4) A new paragraph (3)(g)(iv) is inserted, *to read*:

“(iv) in implementing the proposals Council recognises that proposals for the future operation of the Williamson Art Gallery have been drawn up by officers and that consultation with staff is in progress .

As these have been developed with the aim of establishing a more flexible pattern of opening, along with new approaches to enhance the visitor offer (including adding to the resources now available on-line) these represent desirable changes.

Given that the revised opening times are intended to enable the use of the building by groups by appointment, along with the hire of the facilities and improved catering arrangements, it is reasonable to accept that the identified saving can be achieved with no overall diminution of service.

(5) A new paragraph (3)(g)(v) is inserted, *to read*:

“(v) in implementing the proposals Council notes the level of public interest in the range of facilities at the Europa Pool, as retained within this budget. Council welcomes the steps taken to date.

In the light of the pandemic and associated Public Health advice the opening of Wirral’s leisure facilities will depend on the availability of the buildings and staff to operate facilities in a Covid safe manner.

As the need for additional ventilation for this at Europa Pool was identified at the latter end of 2020 it is encouraging to note this is now being put in hand.

Nevertheless we now recognise that the time remaining for preparation and opening, along with financial constraints, make a target for opening difficult to achieve in the current circumstances.

Council believes that it is highly desirable for facilities such as these to be available to the general public at the earliest permissible date.’

GREEN GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT

Councillor Pat Cleary then moved and spoke to the Green amendment, which Councillor Chris Cooke seconded and then spoke to as follows:

‘That the motion being proposed to adopt a Revenue Budget of £329.4m is amended, so as:

‘(1) The following *are deleted*:

- 1. Savings proposal № 11
“Royden Park Commercial Development – Phase 1: £80,000”**

Proposals for a high-wire facility at Royden Park have not been scrutinised thoroughly or subjected to serious, informed, public consultation. Alternative sites have only had a cursory examination. A rigorous assessment needs to be undertaken of the likely impact on Royden Park should this project proceed. In addition, it is very unlikely that a proposal which is still at the design stage and has yet to achieve necessary permissions could deliver a significant surplus in the coming financial year.

- 2. Savings proposal № 30
“Charging for a range of new and existing**

Environmental: Services” **£144,000”**

Proposed increase in charges for environmental services are socially damaging and environmentally regressive. Charging for services including ERIC, wheely bin repairs/replacements and school recycling collections would impact negatively on the amount of waste recycled and could result in additional cost pressures from higher landfill charges and increased fly-tipping

(2) The following:

1. Savings proposal No 1

“Reduce the subsidy to the Hive Youth Centre from £400k to £300k, (instead of £200k in 2021/22 only): £100,000, *to read:*

“Reduce the subsidy to the Hive Youth Centre from £400k to £315k (for 2021/22 only): £85,000”

2. Savings proposal No 27

“Savings from efficiencies at the Williamson Art Gallery: £90,000”, *to read*

“Savings from efficiencies at the Williamson Art Gallery: £75,000”

3. Savings proposal No 36

“Climate Emergency Budget Balance: £100,000”, *to read*

“Climate Emergency Budget Balance: £79,000”

(3) *The budget gap of £275,000 that would thereby be created is then met, retaining a balanced budget of £329.4m by*

Insertion of the following budget savings proposals:

1. **“Filling Staff vacancies: £240,000**

Our people are our greatest asset and council is grateful for the immense efforts our staff have undertaken over the past year to support residents during an incredibly difficult period. To support our staff in the year ahead Council agrees that vacancies should generally be filled on a timely basis. This will reduce pressures on existing staff and support employment in Wirral during a very difficult time for our local economy.

To achieve these aims Council assumes that vacancies filled will, on average, be at the mid-point on the relevant salary scale rather than the top of the relevant salary scale. Whilst this has the potential in an ideal year to generate £480,000 in savings it is prudent for a variety of reasons to assume that half of that potential can be achieved.
Saving = £240,000.

2. **“Changes to golf fees: £35,000**

Council notes the results of the public consultation on the budget and shares our residents’ concern at the level of council subsidy for our public golf courses (currently £335,000 p.a.).
To reduce the level of council subsidy for public golf whilst further work is undertaken on its future provision in Wirral, this Council agrees that fees and charges for public golf are increased across the board by 5% for 2021/22.
Saving = £35,000’

Councillor Moira McLaughlin, as Leader of the Independent Group, then addressed the Council on the budget proposals.

At 7.34pm the Mayor adjourned the meeting for a short break.

The meeting resumed at 7.47pm.

The budget proposals and amendments were then debated.

Having heard from those seconders who had not already spoken, the Mayor adjourned the meeting for a short break at 9.13pm.

The meeting resumed at 9.20pm

Councillors Pat Cleary, Phil Gilchrist, Jeff Green and Janette Williamson, then replied to the debate.

The Mayor then invited Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, to comment in her capacity as Section 151 Officer to the proposals and amendments submitted. She confirmed that all the proposals were achievable and legal and none would change the statutory Council Tax calculations.

The Mayor then invited Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, to explain the process for voting, having done so, the Council then proceeded to the votes.

In respect of the Green Group budget amendment, the Council divided as follows:

For the amendment (22) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, D Burgess-Joyce, H Cameron, P Cleary, W Clements, M Collins, C Cooke, T Cox, A Gardner, J Green, P Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, J Johnson, M Jordan, I Lewis, C Povall, L Rennie, L Rowlands, S Williams and A Wright.

Against the amendment (38) - Councillors J Bird, A Brame, K Cannon, C Carubia, T Cottier, G Davies, S Foulkes, S Frost, P Gilchrist, K Greaney, E Grey, S Hayes, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, S Kelly, B Kenny, A Leech, M McLaughlin, J McManus, D Mitchell, C Muspratt, Y Nolan, T Norbury, J Robinson, S Spoor, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, M Sullivan, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, J Williams, J Williamson and G Wood.

Abstention – Councillor T Smith (Civic Mayor).

The amendment was therefore lost (22:38) (One abstention).

In respect of the Liberal Democrat Group budget amendment, the Council divided as follows:

For the amendment (27) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, A Brame, D Burgess-Joyce, H Cameron, C Carubia, P Cleary, W Clements, M Collins, C Cooke, T Cox, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, J Green, P Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, J Johnson, M Jordan, S Kelly, I Lewis, D Mitchell, C Povall, L Rennie, L Rowlands, S Williams and A Wright.

Against the amendment (34) - Councillors J Bird, K Cannon, T Cottier, G Davies, S Foulkes, S Frost, K Greaney, E Grey, S Hayes, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, B Kenny, A Leech, M McLaughlin, J McManus, C Muspratt, Y Nolan, T Norbury, J Robinson, T Smith, S Spoor, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, M Sullivan, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, J Williams, J Williamson and G Wood.

The amendment was therefore lost (27:34).

In respect of the Conservative Group budget amendment, the Council divided as follows:

For the amendment (20) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, D Burgess-Joyce, H Cameron, W Clements, M Collins, T Cox, A Gardner, J Green, P Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, J Johnson, M Jordan, I Lewis, C Povall, L Rennie, L Rowlands, S Williams and A Wright.

Against the amendment (41) - Councillors J Bird, A Brame, K Cannon, C Carubia, P Cleary, C Cooke, T Cottier, G Davies, S Foulkes, S Frost, P Gilchrist, K Greaney, E Grey, S Hayes, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, S Kelly, B Kenny, A Leech, M McLaughlin, J McManus, D Mitchell, C

Muspratt, Y Nolan, T Norbury, J Robinson, T Smith, S Spoor, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, M Sullivan, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, J Williams, J Williamson and G Wood.

The amendment was therefore lost (20:41).

In respect of the Labour Group budget motion, the Council voted as follows:

For the motion (61) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, J Bird, A Brame, D Burgess-Joyce, H Cameron, K Cannon, C Carubia, P Cleary, W Clements, M Collins, C Cooke, T Cottier, T Cox, G Davies, S Foulkes, S Frost, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, K Greaney, J Green, E Grey, P Hayes, S Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, J Johnson, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, M Jordan, S Kelly, B Kenny, A Leech, I Lewis, M McLaughlin, J McManus, D Mitchell, C Muspratt, Y Nolan, T Norbury, C Povall, L Rennie, J Robinson, L Rowlands, T Smith, S Spoor, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, M Sullivan, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, J Williams, S Williams, J Williamson, G Wood and A Wright.

Against the motion – none.

The motion was therefore carried (61:0).

The Council were then invited to vote on the Statutory calculations for the Council Tax levels for 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

The Council voted as follows:

For the motion (60) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, J Bird, A Brame, D Burgess-Joyce, H Cameron, K Cannon, C Carubia, P Cleary, W Clements, M Collins, C Cooke, T Cottier, T Cox, G Davies, S Foulkes, S Frost, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, K Greaney, J Green, E Grey, P Hayes, S Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, J Johnson, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, M Jordan, S Kelly, B Kenny, A Leech, I Lewis, M McLaughlin, J McManus, D Mitchell, C Muspratt, Y Nolan, T Norbury, C Povall, L Rennie, J Robinson, L Rowlands, S Spoor, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, M Sullivan, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, J Williams, S Williams, J Williamson, G Wood and A Wright.

Against the motion – none.

Abstention – Councillor T Smith (Civic Mayor).

The motion was therefore carried (60:0) (One abstention).

A. Resolved (61:0) – That Council:

- (1) Approves a Revenue Budget of £329.4m but which differs from the proposals included within the public budget consultation as shown at Appendix 4, producing a revised set of Budget Proposals, consisting of:**

Proposal

Value

1.	Reduce the subsidy to the Hive Youth Centre from £400k to £300k, (instead of £200k in 2021/22 only)	£100,000
2.	Modernisation & Social Care combined: Staff Efficiency Savings	£102,000
3.	Review of the Neighbourhood Services Directorate	£350,000
4.	Additional and increased parking charges: Whole scale car parking review	£1,000,000
5.	Reduction in grass cutting and maintenance of roadside verges and all Parks and Open Spaces	£250,000
6.	Amenity space and grass verge maintenance cessation	£100,000
7.	Contract Efficiency Savings with BIFFA	£75,000
8.	Income generated from establishing targeted and discretionary environmental enforcement	£150,000
9.	Culture and Visitor Economy savings	£620,000
10.	Pause re-opening of Woodchurch Leisure Centre	£322,000
11.	Royden Park Commercial Development - Phase 1	£80,000
12.	Birkenhead Market Restructure	£240,000
13.	Budget Allocation for DDA	£200,000
14.	Delay the ceasing of support for Community Alarms	£200,000
15.	Wirral Evolutions review of day services people with Learning Disabilities	£500,000
16.	Mitigate ward member budget pause and allocate £1000 per Member (£66,000) to support local voluntary organisations and initiatives	£184,000
17.	One Stop Shop Service Reduction	£98,000
18.	Restructure of Revenues & Benefits	£150,000
19.	Business Change Service Reduction	£670,000
20.	New Staffing Structure in IT Services	£618,000
21.	Centralised Print Process	£157,000
22.	Business Support Unit - Staffing Reduction	£237,000
23.	Hardship fund and reduction in bad debt provision	£1,000,000
24.	Contract Management & Commissioning	£350,000
25.	Apprenticeships	£148,000
26.	Traded Services Review	£270,000
27.	Savings from efficiencies at the Williamson Art Gallery	£90,000
28.	Savings from closing the Fun Pool only at Europa	£250,000
29.	Provision of additional catering across multi-site and new in-house catering offer at West Kirby	£35,000

30.	Additional savings from workforce efficiencies	£150,000
31.	Reduction in pressure for pay increases for low paid workers	£236,000
32.	Freezing of the Merseytravel Levy for 2021/22 -	£439,000
33.	Funding for the Hive from local businesses -	£100,000
34.	Fund the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme from Covid-19 funding	£200,000
35.	Request to bring forward various asset sales -	£394,000
36.	Remove the Brexit Reserve	£100,000
37.	Filling Staff Vacancies	£240,000
38.	Zero Based Budgeting	£170,000

(2) That further budget allocation be provided for the following:

1. To enable development of the wider youth offer in Wirral: £200,000

(3) That Council:

- a) Adopts the summary Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out as Appendix 3 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Financial Resilience Plan (MTFS) set out as Appendix 11.
- b) Adopts the fees and charges set out as Appendix 7, with delegated authority being granted:
 - (i) to the Section 151 Officer to update the Council's Fees and Charges Directory prior to publication before 1 April 2021.
 - (ii) to the relevant Director with portfolio, in consultation with the relevant Committee's Chair and Group Spokespersons, to vary existing fees and charges.
- c) Approves the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for Business Rates for 2021/22 set out as Appendix 8.
- d) Set and maintain the level of General Fund Balances the higher of
 - (i) £10.7m of general fund; or
 - (ii) 3% of the Council's new revenue budget,
 to be based on a locally determined assessment of the financial risks that the Council may face in the future in accordance with the report of the s.151 Officer (Appendix 10).
- e) Proceeds with the request for exceptional financial support with the conditions outlined in the letter from the Minister of

State for Regional Growth and Local Government dated 2 February 2021.

- f) Approves the 2021/22 Schools Budget of £299.487m.
- g) Authorises, in respect of the Budget Proposals, that:
- (i) the relevant Committee receiving the further work being undertaken in respect of:
 - (1) car parking charges;
 - (2) enforcement costs recovery; and
 - (3) grass cutting and re-wildingto develop and implement proposals in line with the agreed Budget; and
 - (ii) the Director with portfolio to undertake such actions as they consider are necessary to implement the agreed Budget and consequential proposals developed as part of the formulation process and update Committees accordingly.
 - (iii) in implementing the proposals Council requests that the Europa Fun Pool re-opens, when its practicable and safe to do so in line with government and public health guidance, during the School Summer holidays.”

In stating this request, Council notes that:

- Unknown intelligence relating to the COVID situation and what that will look like on / post 21 June 2021 and *‘previous advice given by The Director of Public Health in that the fun pool would not be able to open under current restrictions’*
- There is currently no guidance on what a “safe” number of people would be.
- To open the Europa Fun Pool would require a recruitment exercise for additional staffing and supported lifeguard training which would be challenging to undertake between 22 June and the start of the summer holidays, given that the Lifeguard Training takes a minimum of 5 weeks.
- The following current guidance has been released in relation to events and large gatherings, which

would need to be kept under review. The maximum Europa Fun Pool capacity could be considered as similar to a large wedding every 1.5 hours “*DCMS and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have been working with representatives from industry and civil society to explore when and how events with larger crowd sizes, less social distancing or in settings where transmission is more likely (i.e. indoors), will be able to return safely. This includes sports events, music festivals and large weddings and conferences.*”

- That a reduction in numbers to what might be considered a safe level could be considered, given this is a much-used facility during the School Summer holidays.”

B. Resolved (60:0) (One abstention) –

It be noted that in accordance with Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), that Policy and Resources Committee on 11th November 2020 calculated the Council Tax Base 2021/22 for the whole of the properties in its area as 94,198.6 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) (“the Act”);

- a) £156,677,700 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2021/22 (item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:
 - i) £859,070,000 this being the aggregate of the amounts calculated in accordance with Section 31A (2) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates that will be charged to a revenue account for the year in performing its functions, that are required to be set aside for contingencies and reserves and required to be transferred from its General Fund to its Collection Fund in the year and
 - ii) £702,392,300 this being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (3) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts of income that the Council estimates will be

credited to a revenue account for the year in accordance with proper practices, the amount of reserves that are estimated to be used to provide for the items referred to in paragraph (a) above, and required to be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in the year.

- b) £1,663.27 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2021/22. This amount being calculated as item R divided by item T (as above).
- c) That in accordance with section 36(1) of the Act that the following amounts are calculated for each valuation band in the area:

Wirral – Basic Amount of Council Tax per Valuation Band

A	B	C	D
£1,108.85	£1,293.65	£1,478.46	£1,663.27
E	F	G	H
£2,032.89	£2,402.50	£2,772.12	£3,326.54

These amounts being the amounts given by multiplying the amount calculated as the Basic Amount of Council Tax by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings in a particular valuation band which is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D.

It be determined that the amount set in (c) above as the Council's Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2021/22 is not excessive in accordance with the principles determined by the Secretary of State under section 52ZC of the Act (as amended) and that no Referendum to approve the Basic Amount of Council Tax is required. The principles require a Referendum to be held for any increases of 5% or above, as per the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22. The Settlement included provision for local authorities with social care responsibilities to increase the level of Council Tax by 3% for the Adult Social Care precept; and by up to 2% for the Council element. Where Council Tax is increased at or above 5% a local referendum will be required. The overall proposed increase in the Wirral basic Council Tax is 4.99%, including a Council increase of 1.99%, and is therefore within the Settlement's ceilings.

Wirral – Basic Amount of Council Tax Comparison for Referendum

	2020/21	2021/22	Change	Change
	£	£	£	%
Band D	1,584.21	1,663.27	79.06	4.99

To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority issue precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area. This will be as indicated in the tables which when received will be included in updated tables to Council.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside

A	B	C	D
£151.31	£176.53	£201.75	£226.97
E	F	G	H
£277.41	£327.85	£378.28	£453.94

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority

A	B	C	D
£54.67	£63.78	£72.89	£82.00
E	F	G	H
£100.22	£118.44	£136.67	£164.00

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority –Mayoral Precept

A	B	C	D
£12.67	£14.78	£16.89	£19.00
E	F	G	H
£23.22	£27.44	£31.67	£38.00

That having calculated the amounts for Wirral together with the Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region – Mayoral Precept the Council in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Act hereby sets the following amounts as the total amount of Council Tax for the year 2021/22 for each of the categories of dwellings.

Total Council Tax for Wirral

A	B	C	D
£1,327.50	£1,548.74	£1,769.99	£1,991.24
E	F	G	H
£2,433.74	£2,876.23	£3,318.74	£3,982.48

61 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021-26**

The fourth item requiring approval was in relation to the capital programme for 2021-26.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 69 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed in that the following be approved:

- (1) new bids as detailed in Appendix 2 to this report requiring £12.133 million borrowing for inclusion in the Capital Programme;**
- (2) any new bids supported by grant funding do not commence until written confirmation has been received from the granting authority;**
- (3) the Capital Programme 2021/26 (as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report);**
- (4) that progress on delivering the Capital Programme will be presented in accordance within the agreed Capital Monitoring arrangements.**

62 **CAPITAL FINANCING STRATEGY 2021/22**

The fifth item requiring approval was in relation to the Capital Financing Strategy for 2021/22.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 70 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed in that the following be approved:

- (1) the Capital Strategy for 2021/22;**
- (2) the associated Prudential Indicators to be adopted;**
- (3) the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision policy.**

63 **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021/22**

The sixth item requiring approval was in relation to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 71 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed in that the following be approved:

- (1) the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2021/2022;**
- (2) the Treasury Management Indicators.**

64 **INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22**

The seventh item requiring approval was in relation to the Investment Strategy for 2021/22.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Anita Leech, it was –

Resolved – That the recommendations contained within minute 72 of the Policy and Resources Committee of 17 February, 2021, be agreed in that the following be approved:

the Investment Strategy for 2021/2022 which includes potential investment in the following activity areas:

- 1. Commercial Property**
- 2. Service Investments: Loans**
- 3. Service Investment: Shares (non-currently held)**
- 4. Loan Commitments and financial Guarantees**