

COUNCIL – 1 March 2010

MATTERS FOR DEBATE

The Budget Council procedure provides for one debate on those matters relating to the budget. The times of speeches are in accordance with that procedure. Voting will firstly be on the Conservative budget proposal, then the other amendments.

1. CONSERVATIVE GROUP BUDGET PROPOSAL 2010/11

Proposed by Councillor Green (15 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie (5 minutes)

(1) That the revenue estimates for 2010/11, now submitted to Council, be approved, subject to the amendments in paragraphs (3) and (4) below.

(2) It be noted that this budget proposal is based on the belief that:

- As council tax payers have no choice but to pay the level of council tax imposed upon them, the Council should do all it can to keep council tax levels as low as possible. Council recognises that this is important to Wirral residents, particularly those on fixed incomes who have seen returns from a life time of savings reduced, and are also faced with increases in household bills generally and increasing national taxes.
- That the public deserve to be assured that when Council Officers are making spending choices they are aware that 'every pound matters'
- That the Council can and should take the lead to work with other organisations in the wider Wirral public sector to ensure that duplication is reduced, best practice shared and that the public of Wirral are well served.
- Wirral deserves a Council that is aware of resident's needs, listens to the public's views and is inclusive in its decision making.
- Our Council should ensure that no part of Wirral is ignored and that residents, community groups and businesses are consulted regarding the type of Wirral they want to live in, by having their comments fully considered, evaluated and responded to.

This Conservative Group budget amendment therefore proposes NO increase on the 2009 -2010 level of Wirral Council Tax and an overall increase of only 0.55% when precepts are included.

It is further noted that this approach will mean £1,680,000 stays with Wirral residents and families to save or spend strengthening our local economy, creating and protecting jobs.

This budget preserves the Zero Council Tax increase for Pensioner Households over 75. However, by setting a budget increase at this level £140,000 of the £465,000 in the growth is released. Overall this represents around a 6% discount on Council tax bills.

(3) Amendments

Increased expenditure

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| (i) Resident Insight, Consultation and Direct Democracy | £180,000 |
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(ii) Enhancing Well Being pilot £20,000

This pilot programme is to support those community groups that make significant contributions to their community but may be experiencing temporary financial hardship.

For clarity the Allendale Centre to be the first 'enhancing well being' pilot

(iii) Integrating the work of public sector agencies across Wirral £50,000

This sum is being made available to support the development of ideas and initiatives in relation to collaboration and shared services between the Council and its key public service partners working principally within the Borough

(iv) Supporting Local Businesses Fund £250,000

The impending increased business rates will place additional burdens on small businesses and could put their viability in doubt. This fund will allow businesses to apply for one year Grant Support during 2010 – 2011.

(v) Wirral Parks ASB Response Squad £150,000

This investment will provide for a parks team, initially within the Community Patrol, to ensure an immediate response to reports of anti social behaviour in Council Parks. The impact of this initiative will be reviewed at the end of 2010 – 2011.

(vi) Communal flats refuse collection £70,000

Council will provide 'bulk bins' for residents living in communal flats. This will remove the current unfairness that makes Wirral residents living in communal flats pay twice in order to have their waste removed.

(vii) School Crossing Patrols £30,000

This additional funding reinstates the cut by the Administration in their 2009 – 2010 budget.

(viii) Protecting Front Line Services Fund £2,500,000

This Council wants to ensure that the people of Wirral receive the best possible services and this fund is to be created to provide funding to retain essential services in the event of any sudden or unplanned increases in Council costs or reductions in income.

Savings – Our approach to savings is based on the following three themes

- Putting the Front Line First
- An Every Pound Matters initiative
- Cutting the Cost of Wirral's Politics

The further carbon reductions arising from the savings contained within this budget amendment be reported to the next meeting of the Cabinet for inclusion in the Council's Carbon Budget.

Putting the Front Line First

- (i) All non-front line vacancies to be evaluated (fill, keep vacant or delete) by Employment and Appointments Committee prior to recruitment to any post £300,000

(The terms of reference of the E&A Committee be amended accordingly)

- (ii) Noting that the budget includes £1,300,000 for Corporate Marketing (Graphics, Public Relations and Tourism) this be reduced by £325,000

- (iii) Noting that the budget includes £1,203,000 for external consultancy costs, all appointments to be approved by Cabinet, and this be reduced by £400,000

To control the use of external consultants require Cabinet approval before any future engagement (i.e. the officers' scheme of delegation be revised accordingly)

- (iv) Change Team It is recognised that the Change Team is currently funded from the Efficiency Investment Budget. To give Council management time to plan for the team's future and prioritise its activity it be noted that from 2011-12 the Team will only be funded from the savings/results generated by the Team.

- (v) Reduced Corporate Senior Management Team Costs £600,000

Council notes the Authorities Senior Management Team comprising of Chief Executive, Directors Deputy Directors and Heads of Service costs £3.6 million. Council believes the current structure needs to change to meet the challenges of the future.

Recognising that a new management and departmental structure should enjoy broad political and organisational support this saving to be met from the Efficiency Investment Budget and be delivered from 2011-12.

- (vi) Reduce Car allowance / mileage budget by 10% £188,000

- (vii) Merge administration of One Stop Shops/Libraries £65,000

- (viii) Departmental Procurement Savings £2,176,000

Every Pound Matters

- (i) End first class travel and reduce subsistence spend £30,000

- (ii) End provision and spend on lunch time and evening meal provision £85,000

- (iii) End purchase of bottled water and provision of rented bulk water dispensers £20,000

- (iv) Increased use of telephone conferencing. End 'team building conferences' or 'away days'. Any Team meetings, must be held in Wirral Council owned or supported venues £10,000

- (v) Introduce Electronic payslips £10,000

- (vi) End printed Council Newsletters and replace with electronic versions, avoid printing, do not print in colour unless absolutely necessary (colour printing costs 67% more than black and white) £10,000

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| (vii) Departmental purchasing to be conducted through electronic procurement system | £300,000 |
| (viii) Reduce overtime spend of £1.7 million (it be noted that this sum exempts Technical Services Winter Maintenance Costs) by 10% | £170,000 |

Cutting the Cost of Wirral's Politics

It be noted that Council wishes to end the Cabinet and Scrutiny Model of Council Governance and replace with a Committee structure and that this change would generate considerable savings in its own right for Council Tax payers.

Whilst waiting for such a change:

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| (i) Reduce all Councillor and Special Responsibility Allowances by 5% | £45,000 |
| (ii) Reduce Councillor Support | £55,000 |
| ▪ Sandwiches or meals | |
| ▪ Expenses | |
| ▪ Training | |
| ▪ Group Office costs | |

- (4) It be noted that this proposal leaves the following growth in the Council budget for 2010 – 2011

	£
Zero council tax increase for pensioner households over 75	325,000
Investing in digital infrastructure	1,075,000
New apprenticeships	500,000
Freeze car parking charges	75,000
Additional money for schools	6,400,000
Building Schools for the Future	100,000
Get into Reading	100,000
Reduction in alcohol harm	40,000
Investment in Assistive Technology	1,400,000
Investment in home insulation	1,049,000
Energy efficiency	188,000
Eco schools officer	80,000
Energy efficiency grants	66,000
Promotion and development of CRED scheme	30,000
Don't give a dog a bad name	40,000
Additional investment in waste collection round	114,000
Investment in bulk recycling	171,000
Waste reduction team staffing	100,000
20 mph zones in residential areas	275,000
You Decide additional allocations	55,000
You Decide	260,000
Community transfers	1,362,000
Supporting community groups	40,000
Co-ordination of services for ethnic minority communities	30,000

Council instructs Officers to ensure that budgets stay within limits set for the financial year. Council further requires, in the event of any potential overspend, that Chief Officers consult the Director of Finance immediately and draw up a corrective action plan to be reported to the Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.

- (5)** That for the financial year 2010-11 the Council will ensure that no pensioner household over 75 will have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applies where:
- (i) the Council Tax payer pays Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that are counted as resident for Council Tax purposes are aged 75 or over on 1 April 2010 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2010 eligibility will be effective from the relevant birth date only);
 - (ii) this reduction will be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;
 - (iii) application must be made for the reduction where it is not currently in payment or the potential claimant is not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit;

No pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Benefit will qualify for the reduction.

- (6)** It be noted that, at its meeting on 9 December 2009 the Council calculated the figure of 104,690.0 as its council tax base for the year 2010-11 in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, made under Section 33 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (7)** The following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2010-11 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Collection Fund (Council Tax Benefit) (England) Direction 2002:-
- (a)** £868,942,200 being the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2)(a) to (c) of the Act;
 - (b)** £581,564,100 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(3)(a) to (c) of the Act;
 - (c)** £287,378,100 being the amount by which the aggregate at 7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 7(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;
 - (d)** £157,860,500 being the aggregate of the sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its General Fund in respect of redistributed Non-domestic Rates and Revenue Support Grant, adjusted for the amount of the sums which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year between its Collection Fund and its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and any amount which the Council estimates to be transferred between its Collection Fund and its General Fund pursuant to the Collection Fund (Community Charges) Directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, issued on 7 February 1994;
 - (e)** £1,237.15 being the total amount at 7(c) above less the amount at 7(d) above, divided by the amount at 6 above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;

Valuation Bands

A	£824.77	B	£962.23	C	£1,099.69	D	£1,237.15
E	£1,512.07	F	£1,786.99	G	£2,061.92	H	£2,474.30

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 7(e) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings in

Valuation Band D, calculated in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings as listed in different valuation bands.

(8) It is noted that this equates to NO Wirral Council Tax rise.

(9) It be noted that for the year 2010-11 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts of precept issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:-

Fire

A	£43.18	B	£50.38	C	£57.57	D	£64.77
E	£79.16	F	£93.56	G	£107.95	H	£129.54

Police

A	£97.49	B	£113.73	C	£129.98	D	£146.23
E	£178.73	F	£211.22	G	£243.72	H	£292.46

(10) Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 7 and 9 above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts of council tax for the year 2010-11 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

Valuation Bands

A	£965.44	B	£1,126.34	C	£1,287.24	D	£1,448.15
E	£1,769.96	F	£2,091.77	G	£2,413.59	H	£2,896.30

(11) It is noted that this equates to an overall increase in Council Tax of 0.55%.

Right of reply: Councillor Foulkes (7 minutes)