

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

Monday, 1 March 2010

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Andrew Hodson) in the Chair
Deputy Mayor (Councillor Alan Jennings)

Councillors	RL Abbey	T Harney	S Quinn
	T Anderson	P Hayes	P Reisdorf
	C Blakeley	S Holbrook	L Rennie
	A Bridson	P Johnson	D Roberts
	S Clarke	AER Jones	L Rowlands
	IO Coates	J Keeley	J Salter
	J Crabtree	S Kelly	H Smith
	G Davies	B Kenny	T Smith
	P Davies	D Kirwan	W Smith
	WJ Davies	D Knowles	P Southwood
	F Doyle	I Lewis	J Stapleton
	W Duffey	AR McLachlan	A Taylor
	D Elderton	M McLaughlin	S Taylor
	G Ellis	C Meaden	C Teggins
	S Foulkes	D Mitchell	G Watt
	L Fraser	R Moon	R Wilkins
	G Gardiner	S Mountney	KJ Williams
	J George	S Niblock	P Williams
	P Gilchrist	C Povall	S Williams
	JE Green	A Pritchard	K Wood
	J Hale	J Quinn	

Apologies

Councillors K Hayes M Redfern

113 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor welcomed Jessica Yung, Wirral's Young Poet Laureate, and invited her to give a poetry reading before the start of the meeting. Jade Chen read a poem in Mandarin Chinese.

114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor A Jones declared a personal interest in the Budget (Cabinet minute 232) by virtue of his former Chairmanship of the Allandale Youth Club.

Councillor K Wood (Budget Proposals) by virtue of her being a pensioner householder.

Councillors J Green, A Jennings, A McLachlan, B Kenny, S Williams and L Rowlands, each declared a personal interest in the Schools Budget element of the Budget by virtue of a family member's employment with the authority.

115 **PETITIONS**

In accordance with Standing order 21, the Mayor received a petition submitted by Councillor J George on behalf of 300 signatories objecting to a proposed parking restriction in Commonfield Road, Woodchurch.

116 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2010 had been circulated to members and it was:-

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

117 **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL**

In accordance with Standing Order 13 (Budget Council Procedure), Councillor S Foulkes, Leader of the Council, moved the Cabinet's Budget recommendations duly seconded by Councillor S Holbrook, Deputy Leader, with any additional paragraphs (those relating to precepts), and any other minutes from the Cabinet meeting on 22 February, 2010 that required approval by the Council. The following minutes were deemed to be approved, subject to consideration of the Conservative Group Budget Proposal which was received in accordance with Standing Order 7(2) (see minute 118 post).

(1) Minute 332 (Cabinet – 22.02.2010) BUDGET 2010-11

The Director of Finance presented the draft revenue estimates for 2010/11. A decision was required to enable recommendations to be made to the Council concerning the budget and Council Tax for 2010/11. This involved a key decision on the matter forming part of the budget and policy framework and it had been included in the Forward Plan.

The Leader of the Council submitted and commented on a motion which set out the budget proposals of the joint administration. He informed that the Council Tax rise in Wirral resulting from these proposals would be 1.29%, which would give an overall Tax of 1.67% when the precepts were included, and therefore a below-inflation increase, with the January RPI figures running at 3.7%. He went on to pay tribute to Cabinet Members and officers for their hard work in supporting the budgetary process.

The Leader reported that under the proposed budget there would be no Council Tax increase for pensioner households over 75 years of age and that for the Financial Year 2010/11 the Council would ensure that no pensioner household over 75 would have any increase in Council Tax liability, including the consequences of any police and fire increases. This applied where:

- the Council Tax payer paid Council Tax in Wirral as their main home and all individuals in the household that were counted as resident for Council Tax

purposes were aged 75 or over on 1 April 2010 (but where the qualifying age criterion was met after 1 April 2010 eligibility would be effective from the date of birth only);

- this reduction would be calculated after deduction of all other Council Tax discounts and reliefs;
- application must be made for the reduction where it was not currently in payment of the potential claimant was not in receipt of Council Tax Benefit; and
- no pensioner household in receipt of full Council Tax Benefit would qualify for the reduction.

In seconding the motion and endorsing the Leader's remarks, the Deputy Leader of the Council informed that this was a positive budget, focussed on the future.

Resolved – That

(1) Investing In Wirral's Future

A Budget for Jobs, the Environment and Safer, Stronger Communities

As we emerge from the worst recession since the Second World War, the economic recovery is fragile and expected to be long and slow. The country also faces unprecedented levels of debt in the public finances.

This is a time when many people are being forced to make sacrifices and when those in public service need to be sure that everything they do stands up to public scrutiny, which is why no councillor is accepting any increase in their allowances and rail travel will be strictly scrutinised to ensure only the most appropriate and economic fares are used.

However, against this background, the Council's finances are in good shape, as the effect of previous budget measures in the three-year efficiency plan finally work through. There exists a window of opportunity for the Council to invest in the long term future economic prosperity and environmental sustainability of the Borough, before the National Government brings to bear the expected squeeze on the public finances.

So this budget contains key investments at its heart to support the economy and the environment with measures to invest in next generation communications technology for business to make it more competitive and create more jobs, doubling the original target of 100 apprentices to 200, better equipping our youth for future employment and a scheme to provide free insulation for every home in the Borough, saving people money on their energy bills, attacking fuel poverty as well as reducing carbon emissions and our impact on global warming.

Also, for the first time, this budget includes a carbon budget, set out in a report to Budget Cabinet, which will be the mechanism whereby the Council sets targets to reduce its own spending on energy and carbon emissions year on year.

The budget also provides support for vulnerable people and safer communities. The proposed investment in assistive technology will enable more elderly and vulnerable people to stay in their homes longer, delaying their need for residential or nursing care. This not only improves the freedom and quality of life of our elderly and vulnerable, but is a more cost effective means of delivering care. The popular discount scheme for pensioner households over 75 is further extended so that there is no increase in the level of Council Tax paid in these homes.

Speed is the key factor in reducing both the number and severity of road traffic accidents. Following the success of the Accidents Down 2 Zero campaign, which has reduced average traffic speeds in the trial areas, the budget provides for a comprehensive new policy to introduce a statutory speed limit of 20 mph on non major routes in all residential areas and for variable speed signs for schools on major routes.

Finally, this budget invests in the future of our young people through additional capacity to prepare a multi-million pound bid for further enhancing the physical fabric of our schools. Narrowing the gap in literacy levels between neighbourhoods, and reducing social exclusion, is also a key theme, with funding being provided to continue the successful 'Get into Reading' initiative in the Borough's most deprived wards. Community cohesion will also be promoted by providing extra resources to more effectively address the needs of our ethnic minority communities.

All the above measures seek in these difficult times to advance the aims of the Council's corporate plan, to create a more prosperous and equal Wirral.

(2) Council Tax Levels

The proposed Council Tax increase for Wirral is 1.29%, which will give an overall Council Tax of 1.67% when the precepts are included. This is less than half the current rate of inflation, with the January RPI figures running at 3.7%.

(3) Revenue Estimates

The Revenue Estimates for 2010-11, as set out in the Estimates Book now submitted, be approved subject to the amendments set out below.

**(4) Zero Council Tax Increase for Pensioner Households over 75 £
465,000**

The sum of £465,000 to be allocated to maintaining the Council Tax discount for pensioner households over 75 and meeting the increased cost of a growing number of eligible households claiming the discount, which in 2009/10 amounted to £260,000, to be met from balances in the current year. The sum allocated will also equalise the system so that everyone who is eligible will receive exactly the same percentage discount. This means that no pensioner household over 75 will pay any increase in Council Tax this year, including the

consequences of any increases in Police and Fire precepts. This honours the target set, (which is dependent on the Council's finances), to keep Council Tax increases for pensioner households over 75 at or beneath the level of the published inflation rate in the January Retail Price Index, which this year is 3.7% This is the equivalent of more than 8% discount on their Council Tax Bill.

(5) Creating New Jobs

Investing in Digital Infrastructure with the next generation super-fast fibre optic broadband network for Wirral businesses. 1,075,000

The sum of £1,075,000 be added to the revenue base for a period of four years, complementing the initial sum of £7.7m from Wirral's Working Neighbourhoods Fund, to create a provision which will allow the phased installation of a brand new, next generation, fast fibre optic communications network in Wirral. Current facilities on Wirral are poor, and this £12m investment in a new, next generation access network will allow current Wirral businesses to compete more effectively in the international market, and will also act as a major incentive to attract to Wirral international companies dependent on fast data transmission who want to locate in the UK or Europe.

This will create jobs in the short term, during the period of installation, and in the longer term as new businesses are attracted in and current businesses develop the capacity to expand.

The Director of Regeneration is asked to bring a full report to Cabinet on March 18th

New Apprenticeships 500,000

The sum of £500,000 be allocated from balances to bring the total number of apprenticeships under the successful Wirral Apprentices Scheme to a minimum of 200, which is double the original target of 100 apprentices. Officers are asked to investigate all relevant sources of finance to ensure this programme continues to grow, working in partnership with Wirral Businesses, giving new opportunities to Wirral's young people and maximising any opportunities provided by the two major schemes for digital infrastructure and for extensive home insulation (outlined below).

Freezing Car Parking Charges 75,000

To help support local businesses through the fragile economic recovery the sum of £75,000 is allocated to allow car parking charges in the borough to be frozen at 2009/10 levels in Council managed car parks and on street parking areas. No charges will be introduced in areas where there are currently none.

(6) Investing in Young People and Life Long Education

Additional Money for Schools

6,400,000

Cabinet welcomes the fact, as outlined in the Schools Budget Resolution, that an additional £5.9m has been allocated by the government for Wirral Schools in 2010/11 and notes that this equates to an increase of 4.4% per pupil, which is significantly above the rate of inflation.

Cabinet reaffirms its commitment to Wirral Schools by allocating over £493,000 of Area Based Grant resources.

Building Schools for the Future

100,000

The sum of £100,000 be allocated from the Efficiency Fund to assist in the specialist preparation of a major bid under the Building Schools for the Future programme, which would produce £90m investment in new and modernised schools buildings in Phase 1 alone.

Cabinet notes that this is in addition to the building of a brand new secondary school in Woodchurch, the proposals for a new academy in Birkenhead, and the building or refurbishment in the last ten years of 8 secondary schools and one primary school under the PFI scheme, which demonstrate the total commitment of this administration to the improvement of Wirral's schools.

Get into Reading

100,000

The sum of £100,000 be allocated from balances for a substantial pilot Get into Reading project, aimed at tackling social exclusion and making Get Into Reading sustainable not just now but into the future. This builds on the three year previous core funding, agreed by this council, which runs out in 2011.

The project will have three key target groups. These are : older people suffering from social deprivation in Care Homes, Dementia Care and living alone; Looked After Children throughout the borough; and residents in Wirral's five most deprived areas (Birkenhead and Tranmere, Bidston and St. James, Rock Ferry, Seacombe and Leasowe and Moreton East)

The project will also provide formal training for interested individuals to run Get Into Reading Groups, which are nationally recognised and have a proven therapeutic track record of raising self-confidence, tackling isolation, building a sense of community and assisting those suffering from depression.

Reduction in Alcohol Harm by Preventing Under Age Sales

40,000

The sum of £40,000 be allocated from balances to continue funding

the scheme designed to reduce alcohol sales to under age youngsters which has previously been funded by the NHS but is now time expired. This will enable Trading Standards to continue tackling under age sales of alcohol, using a number of methods including test purchasing. This has been so successful that in 2007 the number of sales to under age youngsters was running at 38%, in 2008 that reduced to 15% and in 2009 the sale rate reduced to single figures, with no recorded sales in the last quarter. It will also be possible to match funding with Jobs for the Future funding and employ two to three trainees who will be trained in enforcement and add to the strength of the team.

(7) Help for the Elderly and Vulnerable

£8.9m Investment in Assistive Technology

1,400,000

£1.4m be allocated from the Efficiency Fund, with £400,000 being allocated from the current 2009/10 Efficiency Fund budget in order to allow a rapid start to the programme, and £1m being allocated from the 2010/11 Efficiency Fund budget as the start of a major £8.9m three year investment in Assistive Technology.

This substantial investment in Assistive Technology for Health and Social Care will dramatically increase the number of people who can be supported in their own homes, using the latest sophisticated telecare monitoring and alarm systems, (examples of which can be seen on the Department's website) with the aim of increasing the numbers supported by this technology from just over 1,500 now to over 14,000 people, by March 2013, enabling many people of all ages and abilities to live safely without fear in their own homes.

This builds on the success of Wirral's current Assistive Technology Service which has been nationally recognised as good practice and which received the North West award in April 2008 for Innovative Health and Social Care Technology, Health and Social Care Awards.

The Director of Adult Social Services is asked to bring a full report to Cabinet on 18 March

(8) £18m 4 Year Investment in Free Home Insulation Initiative

Tackling Fuel Poverty, Improving Wirral's Housing Stock and Reducing our Carbon Footprint.

1,049,000

The sum of £1,049,000 be allocated to revenue as the first year requirement of an ambitious £18m four year investment in extending a free insulation offer to the whole of the borough's private sector households, working in partnership with the energy companies under the auspices of the government's Carbon Emissions Reduction Target scheme. This assumes that government funding will continue after March 2011.(The scheme does not apply to HMRI areas, where

free insulation schemes are already available, or to Social Housing where schemes are also already in place.) By the end of year four, the scheme will have been promoted across the whole borough with resources available for widespread free insulation, with the potential for nearly all of Wirral's homes to have been properly insulated.

Cabinet notes that the scheme will work with the Warmer Wirral initiative and will, in the first instance be promoted and resources concentrated, in areas of high fuel poverty. Householders will, where appropriate, also be referred to other, wider, energy efficiency schemes, improving overall levels of carbon reduction, along with other fuel poverty prevention measures such as the Government's Warm Front Scheme. These measures should contribute substantially to lifting households out of fuel poverty.

The Director of Regeneration is asked to bring a detailed report to Cabinet on 18 March.

(9) Improving the Environment, Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction.

Energy Efficiency 188,000

The sum of £188,000 be allocated from the Efficiency Fund for a number of measures to improve the Council's energy efficiency, including the installation of Automatic Meter Reading, the use of Automatic PC Power down programmes to ensure non essential computers and monitors are not left switched on when they are not needed, Voltage optimisation and the use of Variable Speed Drives. Together these measures will yield an annual saving of £130,000 as well as contributing to a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

Eco Schools Officer and Support for Initiatives 80,000

The sum of £80,000 be invested in the creation of a full time post for an Eco Schools Officer with resources to engage with and educate children and community groups to reduce waste and to increase the amount and quality of waste recycled in schools and in children's homes.

Energy Efficiency Grants for Community Buildings 66,000

To support the long term sustainability of community groups running community buildings, the sum of £66,000 be made available from balances as individual grants to enable those communities to access the appropriate energy efficiency technologies to help reduce their fuel bills and their carbon emissions. The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management is asked to report to Cabinet with the details of an appropriate scheme.

Promotion and Development of CRed Scheme 30,000

The sum of £30,000 be invested from balances to extend and develop use of CRed, the web-based carbon reduction tools, with residents, school children, communities and our partners, in support of the corporate priority to reduce carbon emissions across the Borough.

Don't Give a Dog a Bad Name **40,000**

The sum of £40,000 be used to build on the current successful scheme with funding being used in conjunction with Jobs for the Future funding in order to employ two or three trainees who will be trained in patrolling and enforcement and add to the strength of the team, giving greater coverage over longer periods of time than is possible at the moment.

Additional Investment in Waste Collection Round **114,000**

The sum of £114,000 be allocated to provide weekly residual waste collections from those multi occupancy households with insufficient storage space for inclusion in alternate weekly collection rounds

Investment In Bulk Recycling **171,000**

The sum of £171,000 be invested to secure development of the bulk recycling service for multi occupancy properties.

Make the Staffing within the Waste Reduction Team Permanent **100,000**

The sum of £100,000 be allocated in order to place on permanent staff those existing members of staff working to improve environmental quality standards and encourage recycling and waste reduction. Currently these posts are funded on a temporary basis from the recycling credits.

AN INCREASE IN RECYCLING CREDITS OF £230,000 BE USED TO PARTIALLY OFFSET THE COST OF THESE ITEMS

(10) Improving Road Safety

Comprehensive 20mph zones in Residential Areas **275,000**

The revenue sum of £275,000 be allocated to a rolling four year £1.1m programme to reduce traffic speeds both in residential areas and outside schools, where there are higher numbers of vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists. Cabinet notes that reducing traffic speeds helps reduce the number of accidents, and their severity.

This four year programme will phase in statutory 20mph speed restrictions in non major routes in residential areas across the

borough. It will also implement (following the introduction of regulations from the Department of Transport) variable time specific 20mph speed signs to be used outside schools on through routes where casualties have occurred, with the signs in use at key times in the school day.

Dealing with Extreme Winter Conditions

Cabinet notes that the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been charged with a formal review of winter maintenance arrangements, following this year's severe weather and that one of the options under consideration will be the practicality of building a new salt barn to store additional salt as a hedge against future extreme conditions. Should this be deemed necessary, Cabinet accepts an addition to the future capital programme may be required.

Addition to "You Decide" Allocation for Area Forums 55,000

The additional sum of £5,000 per Area Forum be allocated for one year only to allow communities to make provision for individual winter resilience items for their areas, such as salt bins etc.

(11) Strengthening Wirral's Communities and Increasing Choice

You Decide 260,000

The revenue sum of £260,000 be allocated to change the status of the You Decide programme from a pilot to mainstream activity funded from the base budget, given its continuing success. This success last year saw local communities choose to spend money, amongst other things, on additional sporting and youth activities, including diversionary activity to improve community safety, on crime prevention measures and on environmental improvements.

Community Transfers 1,362,000

Cabinet welcomes the progress made in transferring a number of the Council's assets to the community, but recognises that a number of factors, including the need for community empowerment, procurement issues and the impact of the recession on the private sector, mean that the end transfer date in many cases is later than anticipated, although the pace of transfer will quicken considerably in 2010/11. The sum of £578,000 is therefore allocated from balances in 2009/10 and a provision of £1,362,000 is allocated for 2010/11 to allow for the successful completion of transfers without placing undue pressure on other budgets.

Guinea Gap Baths

In the case of Guinea Gap Baths, Cabinet notes that the original intention was to provide for Guinea Gap baths to remain open while the potential for alternative schemes as part of a longer term waterfront development was explored. The impact of the recession on private sector development now makes this a much more distant possibility. Cabinet therefore asks the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to bring a report to Cabinet which will allow the Cabinet to restore the funding of Guinea Gap to the base budget when the current funding runs out.

Supporting Community Groups – Finance and Governance **40,000**

The sum of £40,000 be allocated to the creation of a peripatetic post, to be held by a qualified accountant and based in the finance department, to support the development of community groups and to support the establishment of models of good governance, sound financial practice and the development of business plans.

Co-ordination of Services for Ethnic Minority Communities in Wirral **30,000**

The sum of 30,000 be allocated to a new two year post, jointly funded by the local authority, NHS Wirral and the Wirral Multi-Cultural Organisation, in order to stimulate and actively encourage, the establishment of fully representative and inclusive BME strategic leadership in Wirral.

This is one-off funding subject to subsequent negotiation and agreement about outcomes, monitoring and evaluation. The post-holder will be expected to identify and generate sufficient income to sustain this post once the Council and PCT funding has ended.

(12) Running a More Efficient Council

The following savings form part of the drive to run a more efficient Council and keep Council Tax increases to a minimum.

8 months savings from the investment in Assistive Technology of which 2 months are bridged for one year at the cost of £400,000 from balances.

SAVINGS
£1.6m

EVRs and subsequent staffing re-organisations.

Net saving
£560,000

Creation of an Integrated Passenger Transport Unit combining the current functions within the Department of Adult Social Services and the Children and Young Peoples Department, to be managed within the Department of Adult Social Services with a consequent transfer of staff and budgets, to yield a saving in 2010-11 of £600,000 with a target saving by 2014 of £1.5m.

£600,000

Restructuring of management and administrative staff within the Department of Adult Social Services £240,000	£240,000
Continuation of the HESPE project continues to provide ongoing staffing savings which for 2010/11 equates to £80,000.	£80,000
Funding the DASS Reform Unit and its activities relating to the development of personalised support from the Efficiency Fund £350,000	£350,000
Increased income from enforcement under NRASWA	£200,000

(13) 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.

(14) 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) £870,622,200 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) £289,058,100 being the amount by which the aggregate at 14(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 14(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 it's 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) £1,253.20 being the total amount at (14c) above less the amount at 14(d) above, divided by the amount at 13 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	£835.47	B	£974.71	C	£1,113.96	D	£1,253.20
E	£1,531.69	F	£1,810.18	G	£2,088.67	H	£2,506.40

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at 14(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.

(15) It is noted that this equates to a Wirral Council Tax rise of 1.29%.

(16) 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

(17) Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 14 and 16 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	£976.14	B	£1,138.82	C	£1,301.51	D	£1,464.20
E	£1,789.58	F	£2,114.96	G	£2,440.34	H	£2,928.40

(18) It is noted that this equates to an overall increase in Council Tax of 1.67%

(2) Minute 331 (Cabinet – 22.02.2010) SCHOOLS BUDGET 2010-2011

The Director of Children’s Services presented a report which recommended the approval of the Schools Budget for 2010-11. He explained that it was the third year of a national three-year funding period for schools (2008-11). In 2008 decisions had been taken about levels of funding based on the Government’s stated priorities. The budget had been presented to Wirral’s Schools Forum on 20 January 2010. The report and the resolution from the Forum were attached as Appendices 1 and 2 to the report.

On 14 January 2010, the Cabinet had received a report that had outlined that energy costs in schools would reduce in 2010-11 by £1.3m following the renewal of

contracts. This would be reflected in the budgets set by schools. The recommendation in the report included a request that the Schools Forum consider a programme of automatic remote reading meter installations in schools, funded from the Schools Budget, in order to help deliver the energy saving scheme. This had been outlined to the Schools Forum who consequently agreed to receive a more detailed report at its next meeting in June 2010.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning highlighted the fact that the Government had again stated that it expected to see Council Tax increases at a 16-year low and this had been re-affirmed in the announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement. Capping action had already been initiated against three Police Authorities to limit their increases to approximately 3%.

He went on to thank the Schools Forum for its contribution and endorsed its proposals set out within the proposed Schools Budget.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Cabinet welcomes the increase in funding from Government through Dedicated Schools Grant of £5.9m for 2010/11. Over the funding period 2008-11 this amounts to over £14.4m more for Wirral Schools;**
- (2) the Cabinet recommends to Council that the Schools' Budget for 2010-11 be set at the level of the adjusted Dedicated Schools Grant which is £193,995,400. This equates to an increase of 4.4% per pupil;**
- (3) it is acknowledged that these increases are above the current CPI rate of inflation (3.5%) and that they compare favourably with the average national increases in funding per pupil of 4.3%;**
- (4) the Cabinet recognises that this budget will help the Council to achieve one of the strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan which is to raise the aspirations of young people. This funding will also contribute towards the four themes in the Children and Young People's Plan:**
 - Reducing health inequalities for children and young people**
 - Intervening and supporting children earlier and in their communities**
 - Reducing the gap in outcomes for children**
 - Improving value for money in services**
- (5) the Cabinet notes that the increase in funding per pupil of 4.4% in 2010/11 includes the following spending assessment by the Government: Minimum Funding Guarantee (2.1%) and Government priorities (1.4%);**
- (6) the Cabinet notes that the Government has set the Minimum Funding Guarantee at 2.1% for the period 2008-2011. This is 1% below the assessment of average cost pressures and assumes an efficiency gain in schools, as part of national public sector efficiency requirements;**
- (7) the projected budget of 2010-2011 includes the following items (for detail see the Appendix of the Director's report):**

Inflation:

Provision is included for teachers pay at 2.3%, other pay at 1% and income at 3%. There is no provision for price inflation.

Headroom:

Headroom is the difference between the DSG and the budget required to continue funding schools at their current level, after allowing for inflation, unavoidable cost pressures and the Minimum Funding Guarantee. Cabinet notes the decisions taken previously about Headroom. In 2010/11 this is allocated as follows:

Deprivation funding to “narrow the gap”	£3,666,000
Increase in Statement value	£170,000

Other Specific Grants

Specific grants have been included in the budget and are detailed in the table below:

	Amount 2009-10	Estimated Amount 2010-11
	£	£
LSC 6 th Form and SEN	21,226,500	TBA
School Development Grant		
Devolved	15,802,300	15,941,100
Central	1,189,500	1,214,500
School Standards Grant	10,526,500	10,637,700
Learnwise – LSC / ESF	1,469,300	826,900
School Lunch Grant	553,300	553,300
Ethnic Minority Achievement	188,200	199,800
Extended School Sustainability	849,500	1,225,900
Extended School Subsidy	226,300	791,600
Targeted Primary and Secondary Strategy	2,176,200	TBA
Making Good Progress	791,600	TBA
Surestart, Early Years and Childcare	9,562,200	10,404,900
Free Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds	404,300	1,685,500
Playing for Success	80,000	80,000
Teachers Development Agency	465,500	465,500
National Challenge	405,000	TBA

Area Based Grant

The following Area Based Grants are also included in the Schools Budget::

	Estimate 2010/11 £
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Secondary behaviour and attendance	68,300
School Development Grant	372,800
Choice Advisors	52,100
Total	493,200

Early Years

The number of children in Early Years settings has increased and Cabinet agrees to allocate growth of £40,000 to meet this requirement.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

There is agreed growth to increase the unit value of statements (£170,000) and to restore the previous cut to the SEN Plan (£150,000). Other pressures in this area however have been contained within the overall SEN provision.

Energy reductions

School energy savings resulting from renegotiated contracts are estimated to be £1.3m in 2010/11. Discussions will take place with the Schools Forum to develop a programme of installing Automatic Energy Readers, this will help to deliver further benefits for schools.

Other Budget Changes

The Cabinet agrees to growth in the budget for Special Staff costs £85,000, Schools Contingency £56,400, a contribution to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board £24,000 and notes the overall reduction in rates and insurances costs of £48,000.

(8) Changes in Special School Places

The Observatory School places for Secondary age pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) will increase in 2010-11 from 46 to 50 as previously agreed. This is part of the successful strategy to reduce the number of placements in out of borough schools.

Claremount places will further reduce from 197 to 189 as part of the planned change to reduce MLD places and increase ASD;

- (9) the Schools Budget reflects the advice and recommendations of the Schools Forum from its meeting on 20th January 2010; and**
- (10) the Cabinet notes the full details of the budget breakdown and recommendations contained within the report and appendices of the Director of Children's Services which have been presented to this meeting.**
- (11) the Cabinet therefore endorses the Schools Budget for 2010-11 and recommends it to the Council for approval; and**

(12) recommends that the £425,800 in unallocated DSG is held in Schools Specific Contingency and carried forward to the next funding period.

(3) Minute 335 (Cabinet – 22.02.2010) CARBON BUDGET 2010-2011

A report by the Director of Technical Services provided details for setting the Council's first Carbon Budget, as requested by Members in a Resolution approved by Council on 14 December 2009, (Minute 77 refers). Members were asked to note and endorse the actions to develop a Carbon Budget across the Council.

Resolved – That

- (1) the actions and progress set out in the report be endorsed;**
- (2) the following be also agreed:**
 - (a) the establishment of the Council's carbon footprint and quantification of the tonnes of CO2 released as a direct result of Council operations for 2010 onwards, as set out in the report;**
 - (b) an appropriate evaluation model for quantifying CO2 emissions as part of the procurement process for new council contracts and other spend from April 2011 be developed by the Director of Finance; and**
 - (c) regular updates be received on progress regarding the carbon budget (the reports to include measures and projects implemented to reduce carbon emissions, including an analysis to show progress being made by department and key service areas); and**
- (3) a briefing be arranged in the next Municipal Year, as part of the Members' Training and Development Programme, on the ethos of a Carbon Budget.**

With the permission of the Council, the Leader reserved part of the time for speaking, allocated to him under Standing Order 5 (1) (h), to his right of reply to the debate on the Conservative Group amendment to the Cabinet's budget.

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

- (a) the adequacy of General Fund balances and reserves;**
- (b) the achievability of any savings included in the budget;**
- (c) the impact of the proposed budget for 2010/11 on the setting of the budget for 2011/12**

A similar report was submitted in respect of the proposals detailed in minute 118 below.

118 **MATTERS FOR DEBATE**

AMENDMENT: CONSERVATIVE GROUP BUDGET PROPOSAL 2010/11

Proposed by Councillor Green

Seconded by Councillor Rennie

(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

Resident Insight, Consultation and Direct Democracy £180,000

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

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

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.

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.

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.

School Crossing Patrols £30,000

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

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

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

(v) 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.

(vi) 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.

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

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

(ix) Departmental Procurement Savings £2,176,000

Every Pound Matters

End first class travel and reduce subsistence spend £30,000

End provision and spend on lunch time and evening meal provision £85,000

End purchase of bottled water and provision of rented bulk water dispensers
£20,000

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

Introduce Electronic payslips £10,000

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

Departmental purchasing to be conducted through electronic procurement system
£300,000

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:

Reduce all Councillor and Special Responsibility Allowances by 5% £45,000

Reduce Councillor Support £55,000

Sandwiches or meals

Expenses

Training

Group Office costs

(1) 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.

(1) 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.

(1) 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.

(2) 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.

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

(2) 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

(2) 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

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

Following the debate, and Councillor Foulkes having replied to it, the amendment was put and lost with the Council dividing as follows:

For the amendment (24) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, P Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, D Knowles, I Lewis, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, S Taylor, GCJ Watt, S Williams and Mrs K Wood.

Against the amendment (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, G Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, J George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, A Jones, SE Kelly, B Kenny, A McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, J Quinn, S Quinn, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggins, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and Mrs P Williams.

Abstainer (1) - Councillor D Kirwan

Resolved - That it be noted that minute 332 is therefore confirmed.

119 **VACANCIES**

There were no nominations to vacancies submitted.