

# CABINET

Monday, 21 February 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	JE Green (Chair)	Finance and Best Value
	Councillors	S Holbrook C Blakeley S Clarke D Elderton G Gardiner A Hodson I Lewis R Moon L Rennie	Corporate Resources Housing and Community Safety Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Culture, Tourism and Leisure Environment Regeneration and Planning Strategy Community and Customer Engagement Social Care and Inclusion Streetscene and Transport Services
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	T Anderson A Bridson G Davies P Davies G Ellis S Foulkes P Gilchrist J Hale M Johnston AER Jones P Kearney	D Knowles D McCubbin AR McLachlan C Meaden S Mountney A Pritchard D Roberts L Rowlands J Salter J Stapleton S Taylor

## 325 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Green declared a personal interest in respect of Minute No. 328 - Schools Budget - by virtue of his wife being a Wirral teacher.

## 326 MINUTES

### RESOLVED -

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3 February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.**

## 327 COUNCIL BUDGET 2011-12

The Director of Finance presented the draft revenue estimates for 2011/12. A decision was required to enable recommendations to be made to the Council concerning the budget and Council Tax for 2011/12.

Councillor J Green in moving the Cabinet's Budget Proposal for 2011/12 reported as follows:

“This is a time of huge change, challenge and opportunity. We all recognise that the national debt crisis has had a significant impact on the way that everyone who delivers public services will do business in the future. Wirral Council has risen to the challenge and put in place changes that have led to a stronger, more open and honest Council delivering better services.

Every pound the Council spends running itself is a pound not available to spend on residents priorities. Wirral residents said they wanted us to reduce management costs and we have made good progress in this area, repairing and driving forward the Strategic Change Programme and examining every area of Council business to make sure that we are making the best use of every resource available to us. This has included reducing absence amongst staff, reducing costly office accommodation and cutting our administrative burden. We have reduced the number of Senior Managers we employ by a quarter - to date we have cut management costs saving £13.6 million over the next five years.

Our focus on driving down the cost of running the Council has enabled us to produce a budget that protects delivery of services on the ground. By reducing management costs and what we spend on administration we have been able to ensure we continue to deliver the services that matter the most. In addition it has enabled us to invest further where necessary to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society.

Jobs matter and the prudent steps we have taken will ensure that we can continue to support our local employers to create job opportunities, particularly for our young people to rebalance our local economy for the benefit of families in every part of Wirral.

The successful implementation of the budget and policy strategy laid out immediately following the formation of our Administration has ensured that we have avoided the crisis management seen in other local authorities and have delivered a **0% rise in the Council Tax for Wirral residents**. We also recognise the burden that would be placed on those with modest fixed incomes by a rise in Council Tax and we have therefore **maintained Council tax relief for over 75s** ensuring that no Wirral resident will see their Council Tax rise this coming year.

### **Cutting the cost of Council administration**

Through our commitment to making every pound of the public's money matter we note that the following savings have been identified:

#### **Savings previously agreed by Council**

Early Voluntary Retirement & Voluntary Severance	£24.3 million
Additional saving arising directly from the consultation exercise	£0.691 million
Strategic Change Programme	£10.725 million
Every Pound Matters	£12.3 million

The Administration has continued to examine all reserves and departmental budgets for further savings opportunities and have identified the following further savings:

**New savings**

Consequential non staff cost savings arising from Early Voluntary Retirement & Voluntary Severance programme	£300,000 savings to the Council's car allowance bill £200,000 savings to the Council's office supplies bill £250,000 additional pay bill savings arising from overtime costs of staff who have left
Further development of the Council's Strategic Change Programme	£500,000 driving down what we spend on contracts
Every Pound Matters	£240,000 - from a 40% reduction in consultancy budget £1.075 million by Broadband re-phasing one off saving and aligning with the tender process £2.2 million Housing Benefit Reserve and Provision transfer to balances

It is noted that the Coalition Government has made an additional £4.9 million available to Wirral Council to be deployed, with the agreement of NHS Wirral, to support Adult Social Care where there is a health benefit.

Cabinet notes that in the settlement for 2011-12 there is no increase (or decrease) in school funding per pupil. The Administration particularly welcomes the £5 million contribution to the Schools Budget from the Coalition Government's pupil premium.

In addition and due to the effective use of the Efficiency Investment Budget over the last 10 months, £5.5 million of additional revenue expenditure is available to invest in this fund to support Council services through a period of rapid and dynamic change.

It is because of this Administration's commitment to achieve the maximum value from each pound of tax payer's money and the prudent management of the Council's finances that we have achieved a 0% Council Tax increase. Importantly we are able to ensure that the things residents have told us matter the most will be part of the Council's ongoing budget. In addition where we have found one-off savings, this money will be invested in projects for the forthcoming year that will further enrich people's lives."

Councillor J Green informed that he was presenting a balanced budget and this was the first time he could remember the Council reaching this stage of the year in such a position. The Director of Finance concurred with Councillor Green on this.

In seconding the Motion and endorsing the Leader's remarks, Councillor S Holbrook informed that this was a positive budget, which reflected people's priorities and maintained and improved the quality of service. This was the result of the hard work of dedicated staff, committed to protecting services Wirral residents valued most and due to the feedback from the public. There would be no significant impact to front

line services, a balanced budget had been achieved without any compulsory redundancies.

Councillor J Green placed on record his thanks to the Deputy Leader and his colleagues for their help and effort in preparing this budget.

Councillor L Rennie thanked the Leader on behalf of the Cabinet. She informed that the Council had now turned a corner and this was exceptionally good for the residents of Wirral. With a 0% increase in Council Tax the Council was still maintaining enhanced services at a difficult time in local government.

Councillor Lewis made reference to the important initiative in place to combat dog fouling, the Council's recycling project and the Council's commitment to Early Years.

Councillor G Gardiner referred to the package of environmental measures in place to help reduce Wirral's carbon footprint.

Councillor J Green placed on record his thanks to Councillor Gardiner for her absolute commitment to the environment and to reducing the carbon footprint.

Councillor J Green also thanked the Director of Finance and his Team for all of their hard work and support and the Interim Chief Executive for the work he and his entire team had done to assist the budget making process.

**RESOLVED: That**

### **Your FAMILY: Services for Children and Young People**

Wirral is home to almost 78,000 children and young people. It is a good place to grow up and most children and young people will fulfil the aspirations that we, their parents and their carers have for them. However, some children and young people experience real disadvantage, poverty, hardship and failure to achieve the results they should in school. Our work will be targeted at seeking to ensure that all of our young people grow up in safety and have the best possible start in life.

#### **Caring for our most vulnerable children**

It be noted that an additional £1 million has been placed in the Council's base budget to supplement and enhance the Government's new Early Intervention Grant to:

- Give the highest priority to protecting, promoting and enhancing Sure Start and our Children's Centres. This means in Wirral there will be no reduction in the overall Sure Start budget: **£700,000**.
- We are committed to continuing the excellent work undertaken by the Council and a range of partners from across the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector to support and raise the aspirations of disabled children: **£300,000**.

## **In addition**

- The Administration is aware of the potential impact on schools budgets from the effects of outstanding equal pay claims. To protect the education of all Wirral children, and spending in our class rooms, we will make a contribution to the costs of equal pay in schools from the equal pay reserve: **£1 million**.
- We will enhance every Sure Start Centre, enabling our dedicated staff to offer even more opportunities for the children and families they serve during 2011-2012. This will include an additional £2,000 grant for every Centre to buy new equipment and offer additional enriching activities and experiences for families: **£32,000**.
- Residents who provide foster care opportunities for children to be brought up in a safe and caring environment deserve all the support we can provide. Our residents provided the highest response of all as part of the Wirral's Future consultation when asked to suggest ideas about how more carers could be recruited. We are therefore ensuring that foster care allowances are increased in line with national recommendations: **£130,000**.
- We will invest to cover inflation costs of our independent residential care contracts: **£95,000**.
- Wirral Council is the parent to around 650 children who are in our care. Many receive valuable support and assistance from their peers on the Children in Care Council. During 2011-2012 we will invest further in a wide range of communication and engagement services to ensure we involve even more of our children in this activity: **£20,000**.
- The transition to becoming an adult can be difficult for many children who have been in care or who have experienced difficulties and chaos in their young lives. We will therefore protect the Stop Gap service which is an intensive support programme for Wirral's vulnerable, homeless 16-17 year old young people, who have complex or multiple needs: **£87,000**.
- Following the introduction of youth hubs elsewhere in the Wirral, we will provide the resources necessary to progress the development of the brand new youth hub facility in Birkenhead with the 'Onside' organisation, local youth partners and the Fire Service: **£50,000**.
- The Administration recognise that despite the significant amount of work that has taken place since 2006/7 through the Wirral Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy, which itself has led to a sustained reduction in alcohol-specific hospital admissions for young people, Wirral remains one of the worst areas in the country for alcohol specific hospital admissions for under 18s. We also recognise the valuable work undertaken by our Trading Standards Officers to combat the illegal sale of alcohol to young people.

In line with the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Access to Alcohol by Young People in Wirral, we will make permanent the Trading Standards

posts required to continue the work to control the illicit sale of alcohol to young people: **£40,000**.

- We are committed to tackling child poverty in Wirral, and in line with our commitment to consult, involve and engage, during 2011-2012, we will invest in targeted engagement with Wirral organisations and local communities to develop an action plan for Wirral with the aim of lifting children and families out of poverty: **£10,000**.

### **Your FAMILY: Adult Social Services**

A key priority for the Council is to improve the quality of services we deliver for vulnerable people. This necessity was highlighted by the 2010 Care Quality Commission inspection report which found that our services were simply not good enough. A robust plan is now in place to ensure urgent and lasting improvements are made.

Wirral's Future consultation identified two key priorities for future delivery of services; **affordability and quality**

- We will therefore invest to ensure we have the staff in place with the necessary skills to provide rigorous quality assurance of provision for our vulnerable residents so that we can secure for them the improvements we have committed to deliver: **£600,000**.
- We also know that the number of older people in need of our care is increasing. The Adult Social Services Task Force considered this and recommended that budgets should properly reflect demand where the needs of vulnerable people are known. Therefore rather than expect the department to meet this demand within existing budgets we are increasing the budget of Adult Social Services appropriately: **£2 million**.
- The Council's support for children with learning disabilities is excellent – support that should be maintained as they become adults. We are therefore providing further investment into the support of young adults with Learning Disabilities as they make the transition from childhood to adult: **£800,000**.
- No one deserves our support more than the men and women who have served their country in the Armed Forces. We will establish an Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway to support the men and women we have asked to fight our country's wars by providing office accommodation and start up costs for volunteers to then signpost members of the armed forces, their families and local veterans to a range of support services with set up funding this year: **£20,000**.

### **Your NEIGHBOURHOOD**

We understand that the most important influence on residents overall quality of life is the house and street where they live. We are committed to listening and engaging with Wirral residents and providing opportunities to get involved with the issues that matter the most to them. We know Wirral's environment really matters to local people and we are strongly committed to reducing Wirral's carbon footprint. We will

deliver improvements in recycling while putting in place further innovative energy saving measures to deliver on our 60% carbon reduction target by 2025.

- Wirral's Future consultation identified anti-social behaviour as a key concern to Wirral residents and it is vital that we provide the most effective action possible. We will conduct a full review of the Council's and partner organisation approach, including the implementation of our commitment to community justice in this vital area. Therefore we will provide funding to the ASB team for a further twelve months to enable this review to take place: **£290,000.**
- In addition, we will re-introduce daytime staffing of the CCTV control room at a cost of £60,000 to the base budget. Any additional income arising from increased issuing of fixed penalty notices as a result of the improved monitoring of CCTV will be directed to a community fund, with the proceeds applied to future community projects: **£60,000.**
- We will secure the provision of advocacy and support service for survivors of domestic violence coupled with the provision of information and intelligence to make Wirral communities safer: **£500,000.**
- The Coalition Government's new Homelessness Grant will be invested to combat homelessness, assist those facing re-possession, prevent tenancy fraud and reduce levels of under occupation. It will also be used to support the Citizens Advice Bureau assist residents facing problems in their housing: **£171,000.**
- We will make a significant additional capital investment to maintain and improve Wirral's roads through a programme of highway maintenance and road safety improvements: **£1.6 million.**
- We are committed to making our roads safer in residential areas and outside our schools by implementing statutory 20 mph speed restrictions in non-major routes in residential areas throughout Wirral. Any of the £275,000 committed to this project last year and still not spent will be rolled forward and added to a further £275,000 in 2011-2012.
- We will make a significant capital investment in solar energy on appropriate Council buildings. Such an investment will add to revenue costs however, the proposed investment will yield savings in energy costs in excess of the capital financing costs, result in CO2 savings of approximately 400 tonnes per year and provide a major boost for employment in Wirral's growing low carbon economy: **£2.8 million.**
- The Administration welcomes the success and the 30 local jobs created by the free household insulation initiative. We confirm our commitment to continuing with the programme to provide free insulation to every household in Wirral. Cabinet notes that £729,000 of the £1.049 million committed last year has been spent to date, and confirms that the balance will be rolled forward and added to a further £1.049 million in 2011/12.

- This Administration appreciates the valuable work undertaken by community groups and understands the financial pressures that make it difficult for them to invest in their buildings in order to reduce overheads. We will therefore add £57,000 to the balance of the Community Energy Efficiency Fund, bringing the total to £110,000. To widen and increase access to these much needed resources, we will also, as a matter of urgency, reduce the bureaucracy placed on voluntary and community groups by simplifying the application and approval process. These funds will be allocated to Area Forums for them to recommend to Cabinet appropriate schemes for approval: **£110,000.**
- The Administration believes the Assistant Recycling Project Officers have made a significant contribution to sustaining the improvement in Wirral's recycling performance and reducing the amount of contaminated recycling that would otherwise be sent to landfill thereby reducing the Council's exposure to landfill tax. Therefore, we will make the six Assistant Recycling Project Officer posts permanent: **£95,000.**
- We will also make a revenue investment in our waste infrastructure: **£202,000.**
- We note the success of the work of the Dog Fouling Enforcement Team, currently carried out by staff working through the Future Jobs Fund. The work of this team has resulted in significant reductions in dog fouling in targeted locations as well as additional benefits in relation to Streetscene such as litter enforcement. We will therefore establish this team, team leader and 4 dog fouling wardens on a permanent basis with an additional £10,000 to deliver extra enforcement activity at weekends: **£120,000.**
- To support the fantastic work of the volunteers and our staff who have worked hard to establish a Friends of Birkenhead Kennels Group, we will demonstrate the Council's support for their commitment and initiative by investing during the year to make improvements they have requested to the Council's dog kennels: **£7,400.**
- We will ensure our Streetscene activity is not compromised and that our contract delivers an excellent standard of service by meeting inflation costs on the existing contract: **£400,000.**
- We will invest in our vibrant weekend football leagues by investing £20,000 in the provision of equipment and pitch clean ups. We also believe that children's play areas should be cleansed at weekends so that they remain clean, safe and available for children at the times when they are most likely to be used. We will therefore provide an additional £40,000 to enable weekend inspection and cleaning work to be carried out: **£60,000.**
- We acknowledge the commitment demonstrated by our allotment holders and the support groups they have created. In recognition of this we will make a fund available for new and existing sites to bid into to invest in improvement works: **£50,000.**



- We welcome the security we have brought to our Leisure Centres by our swift actions this year and reaffirm our commitment to ensure that the existing scheme of free swimming at Council facilities for residents under 18 and over 60 are funded on an ongoing basis through the Base Budget.

We note that more than £1 million has been invested in Wirral libraries since May 2010. As this Administration recognises that Wirral's libraries are a vital part of our civil society and the public's commitment to them is part of what makes Wirral special we reject the approach taken by other local authorities and will not be closing any libraries.

- This Administration also recognises that our libraries are a major asset and are not solely about books. We will implement a communication and engagement campaign to promote Wirral's Library service across all communities, with particular emphasis on the most hard to reach groups in our society. During 2011-2012 we will aim to communicate the huge range of services contained within a library to encourage people – particularly those who are isolated, lonely or feel excluded from society - to utilise their local facility as a safe, warm and secure social space with provision to access services, search for jobs and training, improve literacy levels or to meet and make friends: **£20,000.**
- During 2011-2012 we will modernise the service our libraries provide to make them more attractive and equipped for 21st Century users by investing in the installation of wi-fi, information screens and a brand new e-book service in every library: **£120,000.**
- During 2011-2012 we will ensure that the 'Get into reading' project continues through investing a further year's funding in this important project. Building on our parenting role to the children in our care we will place a particular focus on promoting and improving reading to this group of Wirral's children: **£100,000.**

### **Your ECONOMY**

We will continue to listen to and support our employers, investors and residents to secure our economic recovery. We will give priority to supporting our small businesses and making Wirral a place where business chooses to invest and create jobs. We will seek to achieve a rebalanced economy that retains and attracts our young people and provides opportunity for all to realise their full potential.

Crucially we will maximise our investment in the Wirral Apprentice Programme - guaranteeing even more local people benefit. We will also ensure that every young person leaving school has access to training or a job.

In December we announced an investment of £2.845 million to support the recommendations arising from the Wirral's Future Consultation. This included £500,000 to support a further 142 Apprentices taking the total supported to 313, £200,000 to link business growth with delivering jobs for local people, and £200,000 to support the development of social enterprises and mutuals in Wirral's economy.

Today we are able to announce further support for local businesses and the jobs they can create:

### **Keeping It Local Initiative**

We know that Wirral's district and local retail centres are very important to local people as well as providing valuable local jobs. We are therefore announcing specific measures during 2011-2012 to support their 'bounce back' and assist them to regain their once vibrant environment.

- Following the success of the biggest ever package of reduced car parking charges over Christmas 2010 and to encourage local people to shop in Wirral all car parking, including on street, from Monday through to Friday will be 'free after three': **£482,000.**
- The challenges and issues of empty shops continue to be a problem for many of our district and local shopping centres. We note the early enthusiasm for the pilot projects in Egremont, Bromborough and New Ferry and will therefore, in consultation with local traders and Area Forums, allocate additional funds of £17,500 to address the issue of empty shops this is in addition to the funds already allocated: **£192,500.**
- To make our 27 local and district shopping centres more attractive places to visit, shop and do business, we will, in consultation with local traders and Area Forums, carry out a focussed programme of street cleansing including deep clean, gum removal, repairs and environmental enhancements: **£500,000.**
- From within the Council's current resources we will work with voluntary groups to assist local businesses identify low cost common sense solutions to improve access for people with a disability.

We will give additional support to Wirral's local shops and businesses by seeking to develop innovative publicity and advertising partnerships. This will be achieved from within existing Council press and publicity resources.

A thorough evaluation of the results and economic impact of our 'Keeping It Local Initiative' will be reported to an appropriate meeting of Cabinet.

### **Supporting our small businesses**

Our Administration believes supporting Wirral's 6,755 small and medium sized businesses which together employ some 65,000 people is vital. Research has shown us it is these businesses which properly supported can provide the rapid growth and jobs needed to help rebalance our local economy.

- We will therefore provide dedicated business support and advice to all who have the potential to grow, helping them to identify new business opportunities and access new markets.

- We will also develop a Wirral Business Angels programme whilst further developing and enhancing business workshops delivered through Invest Wirral.

This initial two year investment will ensure an additional 100 jobs are created or safeguarded this year and an additional £2 million invested over and above agreed annual targets: **£250,000**.

- During 2011-2012 the Council will via a successful European Social Fund bid matched from the Working Neighbourhood reserve, invest to support over 700 people currently without jobs who have experienced ill health and other complex problems: **£1.5 million**.

The Administration welcomes the fact that unlike other neighbouring Authorities, and consistent with our experience of what achieves the best outcomes, we have chosen to deliver this activity through voluntary, community and faith sector organisations utilising their experience and links into our communities and with the hardest to reach groups in Wirral.

Taken together the measures announced in this section of our budget proposal and economic regeneration activity in the next 12 months will help create or safeguard 925 jobs and secure some £16 million of additional private sector investment.

### **Your COUNCIL**

As a 'can-do' Council, we want to be the best we can. Our aim is to deliver first class services, which are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of local people. Wherever possible we will do this through listening to, engagement with and the empowerment of individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services, and by working together with partners in the public, private, community, voluntary and faith sectors.

**This Administration will invest in and enhance Wirral's Big Society.** The Community, Voluntary and Faith sector in Wirral deliver a wide range of services and activities for local people. This includes direct delivery of services for the most vulnerable, advocacy and advice services along with many community-led activities which have a huge impact and make a really positive impact to people's quality of life.

Unlike neighbouring authorities, we will continue to maintain our investment of around **£11 million**, commissioning services from the Community, Voluntary and Faith sector and providing grants to local organisations. As part of our drive to ensure everything we do is open and transparent we will publish full details of this funding. The dedicated Big Society Unit, established in December 2010, will work with the sector to ensure that a clear funding strategy is put in place which will support the Council to deliver its priorities, provide high-quality local services and enable local organisations to develop and grow.

This Administration believes that a key element of Wirral's Big Society is involving residents in determining Council priorities and giving local residents the opportunity to make real decisions on matters affecting their neighbourhood.

Wirral's Future be a part of it has been a huge success enabling Wirral people to get involved in reshaping Council services and deciding what their Councils priorities are after all. We therefore request that the interim Chief Executive takes all necessary steps, within current resources, to initiate the next phase of Wirral's Future consultation programme for 2011/12 to further embed our Administrations approach of listening, engaging and consulting with our residents.

Our eleven Area Forums are a real strength for Wirral and have been actively involved in distributing funding and helping to set local priorities. Their activities have improved neighbourhoods and communities. We will continue to support and enhance the important role they play by:

- Area Forums will be supported to more robustly influence the way in which we invest our resources in the future. Each Forum will be assisted to develop their own Local Plan with £5,000 provided to each this year to help them to organise community consultation: **£55,000**.
- We recognise Area Forum funding has been distributed in previous years from a variety of sources including one off policy options. This includes, Funds for You – voluntary, community and faith sector grants of £170, 000, You Decide funding of £220, 000 and winter resilience funding of £55,000. We note this totals £445, 000 equating to £40, 500 per Area Forum. This investment will now be safeguarded. In addition, this year we will distribute £200,000 for local road safety schemes as identified by each Area Forum. The Administration will work to increase the transparency and simplify the distribution of all the resources identified: **£645,000**.
- Recognising the value our residents place upon demonstrating their commitment to ethical and responsible trade we will provide resources for a Wirral wide Fair Trade project involving schools, businesses and faith groups, to increase awareness and enhance the Borough's existing Fair Trade status: **£10,000**.

From April 2012, in line with the Coalition Government's democratising of Health Service funding, Public Health will integrate fully with the Council. With full support from all of our Wirral Health partners, including the three Pathfinder GP Commissioning Consortia, Wirral has applied for early adopter status to start the transfer of responsibilities during 2011. The interim Chief Executive will bring an early report to the Council's Cabinet which will detail the integration of Wirral's Public Health service with other Council services and outline the Council's role in fulfilling this new function which currently includes £22 million in public health service spending.

### **Council Staff**

Our employees are the Council's most valuable resource as it is they who oversee or deliver services to the people we serve. It is therefore vital that we continue to improve the way we communicate with each other. We will therefore ensure all staff have an e-mail address and access to a computer. It is noted that this can be achieved at no additional cost to the Council and that by connecting all staff in this way a platform will be provided from which we can build a wide array of digital services for staff to reduce administrative and back office costs still further.

The Administration realise that to allow the 1,100 staff who applied to leave the Council to go will require leadership, imagination, commitment and resources to support the 5,000 people who remain if we are to ensure that the new ways of providing services are to be successfully and effectively achieved.

- The Efficiency Investment Budget will be used to meet the full costs of any restructuring and retraining requirements that have been identified by each Chief Officer. This funding will be released on the confirmation of an appropriate business case by the Strategic Change Programme Board. To meet the full costs of all restructuring requirements identified by Chief Officers: **£2 million.**

The Administration is also aware that 108 people working for Wirral residents have been working for the Council on temporary contracts for over two years. We believe that this is unacceptable leading as it does to unnecessary personal anxiety and financial insecurity. We therefore request the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development to implement a process of issuing every member of staff who has been on a temporary contract in excess of two years with a permanent contract of employment.

In summary, this budget proposal has ensured that no part of Wirral has been left behind and that all of our residents and communities benefit from the Administration's prudent management of the Council's resources.

- **It will keep Wirral children and young people safe and improve their life chances**
- **It will put the most vulnerable members of our society at the heart of all we do as a Council**
- **It will support the creation of private sector employment and the rebalancing of Wirral's economy**
- **It will deliver long overdue environmental improvements to our local shopping centres**
- **It will deliver a step change in carbon reduction and improving our environment, while delivering a major boost to Wirral's low carbon economy**
- **It will foster Wirral's Big Society by changing the way we deliver services, giving greater power to all local residents to improve their neighbourhoods and by protecting spending to voluntary, community and faith based organisations**
- **It will deliver a stronger, listening, more open and honest Council with radically reduced senior management costs delivering better services**

**No Wirral resident will see their Council Tax rise this coming year.**

**We have ensured that we enter the next financial year with balances of £14 million, a prudent approach that secures the Council's long term financial security and we commend it to the Council and the people of Wirral.**

Any requirement of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 to consider reports be dispensed with on the grounds that, in the opinion of the Council, the matters are urgent.

That for the financial year 2011/12 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 2011 (but where the qualifying age criterion is met after 1 April 2011 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.

It be noted that, at its meeting on 9 December 2010 the Council calculated the figure of 104,879 as its council tax base for the year 2011/12 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.

The following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2011/12 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) £833,250,000 being the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (c) of the Act;
- (b) £541,706,000 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) £291,544,000 being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) exceeds the aggregate at (b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year;
- (d) £160,110,000 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) £1,253.20 being the total amount at (c) less the amount at (d), divided by the council tax base, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year;

#### **Wirral Services Valuation Bands**

A £835.47	B £974.71	C £1,113.96	D £1,253
E £1,531	F £1,810.18	G £2,088.67	H £2,506.40

being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (e) 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.

**It is noted that this equates to 0% Wirral Council Tax rise.**

It be noted that for the year 2011/12 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 Valuation Bands**

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 Valuation Bands**

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

Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts for Wirral services and the Fire and Police precepts, 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 2011/12 for each of the categories of dwelling shown below:-

#### **Wirral Council 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

**It is noted that this equates to a 0% overall increase in Council Tax.**

**WIRRAL COUNCIL**  
**SUMMARY OF GENERAL FUND ESTIMATES**  
**CABINET BUDGET PROPOSAL**

	<b>BASE ESTIMATED 2010 £</b>	<b>CURRENT ESTIMATED 2010 £</b>	<b>BASE ESTIMATE 2011/12 £</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<b>Departmental Budgets</b>	<b>309,262,300</b>	<b>302,247,200</b>	<b>267,861,600</b>
Merseytravel	27,344,000	27,344,000	28,817,000
Local Pay Review	1,130,800	956,300	956,300
LABGI & LAA Grants	(1,600,000)	0	0
Council Tax Freeze Grant	0	0	(3,285,000)
Contribution to fund EVR/VS Scheme	0	2,600,000	4,400,000
<b>Net Budget</b>	<b>336,137,100</b>	<b>333,147,500</b>	<b>298,749,900</b>
Contribution from balances	(4,354,000)	(3,919,400)	(2,805,900)
Contribution from balances (EVR/VS)	0	(2,600,000)	(4,400,000)
<b>BUDGET REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>331,783,100</b>	<b>326,628,100</b>	<b>291,544,000</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
Revenue Support Grant	20,016,300	20,016,300	37,498,000
National Non Domestic Rate	137,844,200	137,844,200	121,312,000
Area Based Grant	42,725,000	37,570,000	0
Council Tax Income	131,197,600	131,197,600	131,434,000
Collection Fund Surplus	0	0	1,300,000
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>331,783,100</b>	<b>326,628,100</b>	<b>291,544,000</b>
<b>STATEMENT OF GENERAL BALANCE</b>			
General Balance	10,723,000	10,723,000	14,070,600



Adjustment (following 2009/10 outturn)	0	3,035,000	0
Contribution from Insurance Fund	0	3,400,000	0
Contribution from Reserves/Provisions	0	3,432,000	0
Budget contribution	(4,354,000)	(6,519,400)	(7,205,900)
<b>GENERAL BALANCE AT 31 MARCH</b>	<b>6,369,000</b>	<b>14,070,600</b>	<b>6,864,700</b>

### 328 SCHOOLS BUDGET 2011-2012

The Interim Director of Children's Services presented a report which recommended the approval of the Schools Budget for 2011/12. He explained that the budget required a number of changes to the Local Management of School Funding Formula and a new Early Years Single Funding Formula. Reports on these areas had been presented to the Schools Forum on 25 January 2011 and the resolutions were attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Schools Forum reports were available on the Council's intranet for Members' information.

Councillor S Clarke in endorsing the Schools Budget thanked Wirral Schools for the approach they had adopted to the process. She welcomed the pupil premium which maximised resources for Wirral.

Councillor J Green seconded the Motion and placed on record the Cabinet's thanks to all staff, and in particular, Julia Hassall, Head of Branch (Children's Social Care) (who had delayed having an operation to assist with the drafting of the budget) for all of their hard work in relation to the budgetary process. Members were pleased to note that Ms Hassall was now making a speedy recovery.

#### **RESOLVED - That**

##### **(1) taking account of the views of the Schools Forum:**

- the Schools Budget is approved at the sum of £229,403.700;
- the DSG reserve of £742, 025 is used to meet backdated harmonisation costs in schools;
- the Excess Balance Reserve of £136,934 is also used for this purpose;
- the increase in contributions to combined budgets including Harmonisation back pay £450,000, Local Children's Safeguarding Board £6,000, School Sports Partnership £25,000 and Discretionary Rate Relief £270,000 are noted;
- the budget for schools includes provision for pay harmonisation "going forward" for support staff totalling £1,057,000;

- (2) changes to the local funding formula are agreed for:
- grants estimated at £32.2 million, which are to be consolidated into the formula using the previous grant make up and the latest data available;
  - an Early Years Single Funding Formula be introduced from 1 April 2011 using a single base rate for all providers together with a number of specific supplements for deprivation, quality, flexibility and a headteacher supplement (for Nursery Schools only);
  - that the operation of the formula be reviewed during 2011/12; and
- (3) the Cabinet notes that in the settlement for 2011/12 there is no increase (or decrease) in school funding per pupil. The Administration particularly welcomes the £5 million contribution to the Schools Budget from the Coalition Government's pupil premium.

### 329 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2011-14

A report by the Director of Finance set out the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2011 - 2014 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

#### **RESOLVED – That**

- (1) the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2011 to 2014 be approved;
- (2) the Prudential Indicators be adopted;
- (3) the Minimum Revenue Provision policy be approved;
- (4) the following Council Officers listed in Appendix D of the Strategy Statement, be authorised to approve payments from Council bank accounts for all treasury management activities;

Director of Finance	- Ian E. Coleman
Deputy Director of Finance	- David L.H. Taylor-Smith
Head of ICT	- Vacant
Head of Benefits, Revenue and Customer Services	- Malcolm J. Flanagan
Head of Financial Services	- Thomas W. Sault
Head of Support Services	- Vacant
Chief Accountant	- Peter J. Molyneux
Chief Accountant	- Robert D. Neeld

330 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL FINANCING**

A report by the Director of Finance provided the Cabinet with the further information requested at the meeting on 9 December 2010 when the report on Capital Programme and Financing 2011-2015 was considered.

Councillor S Holbrook informed that he appreciated the work that had gone in to producing the report. He noted the fact that the Council would be investing in Wallasey Town Hall which would allow more staff to work there, so increasing the use of the building and contributing to the accommodation strategy.

Councillor J Green informed that the Council's Capital Programme was a very important strategic tool that would be used to improve facilities to match the Wirral's Future Consultation.

**RESOLVED - That**

- (1) the revised proposals for the Wallasey Town Hall and Wallasey Annexes schemes be reflected in the Capital Programme;**
- (2) an additional investment of £1.1 million in Transport schemes be included within the Capital Programme for 2011/12;**
- (3) the capitalisation of £3.42 million of statutory redundancy costs be included within the Capital Programme for 2010/11; and**
- (4) the Capital Programme 2011-2013 and capital financing, as now presented, be agreed and incorporated within the Council Budget for 2011/12.**

331 **INTERIM CARBON BUDGET 2011-12**

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management advised the Cabinet that reducing Wirral's carbon footprint was a key priority for the Council and that the Council was committed to its pledge to deliver a 60% reduction by 2025. In order to ensure this was met the Council had produced a Carbon Budget to measure the progress that had made.

Each Council service had been given an 'allowance' of CO<sub>2</sub> to operate and deliver their services. Its purpose was to provide a clear picture of the environmental impact of the Council's energy use, which would help it meet its carbon reduction targets.

The report provided an interim Carbon Budget for 2011 - 12, as requested by Cabinet on the 22 February 2010, (Minute No. 335 refers). Councillor G Gardiner informed that its 'Interim' status reflected the fact that significant changes to Council structures and services were currently being considered that would have a significant positive impact over the coming months. The Carbon Budget would therefore be revised to reflect any changes that were made and published in April 2011.

**RESOLVED: That**

- (1) the actions (contained within Appendix B, the Carbon Budget Impact Statement) to implement the Council's interim Carbon Budget for 2011-12 be noted and endorsed;**
- (2) a further report be presented to Cabinet detailing the revisions to the Carbon Budget in April 2011;**
- (3) the proposed investment of £2.8m in solar energy in (included in its amendment to the Capital Programme) which will generate CO2 savings of around 400 tonnes per annum be noted, and this be taken into account when producing the further report for the Cabinet's consideration at its meeting in April 2011;**
- (4) the Merseyside Pension Fund be requested to give consideration to implementing carbon budgeting as part of its normal business activities;**
- (5) an appropriate evaluation model for quantifying CO2 emissions as part of the procurement process for new Council contracts and other spend be developed by the Director of Finance and a report be brought back to the Cabinet at the earliest opportunity;**
- (6) the progress on reducing CO2 emissions be included in the regular performance monitoring reports which are brought to the Cabinet and other Committees; and**
- (7) 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.**

**332 BUDGET COUNCIL PROCEDURE**

A report by Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reminded Members that Standing Order No.13 provided that he

“shall, prior to the Budget meeting of the Council, consult with the Leaders of each political group and submit to the Cabinet and Council a suggested procedure to be adopted at the budget meeting, but if no such procedure is adopted the normal procedures of the Council in relation to amendments to Cabinet recommendations will apply”.

The Director informed that the Budget meeting was clearly different from Ordinary meetings and, therefore, the procedure proposed was based largely on that used since 2008, the relevant sections of the Constitution and one or two suggestions made in the light of comments made in previous years. He made reference to his report and apologised for an error on Page 96. He corrected the line which read:

“The first vote on the Administration's budget, and if it falls..... “

as follows:

“The first vote on the **Labour Group’s** budget, and if it falls.....”

The Director also drew the Cabinet’s attention to the three Special Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings that would be held on three consecutive evenings during the current week. In the light of this, the Labour Group had requested that the deadline for receipt of its Budget Proposals be extended to 12 Noon on Friday, 25 February 2011.

**RESOLVED - That**

- (1) the Budget Council Procedure as amended above be approved; and**
- (2) the Labour Group’s request that the deadline for receipt of its Budget Proposals be extended to 12 Noon on Friday, 25 February 2011 be agreed.**

**333 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

**That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.**

**334 URGENT BUSINESS - ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE**

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management sought approval of terms for the occupation by the Department of Adult Social Care of part of Old Market House, Birkenhead.

The Director informed that the recommended course of action supported the strategic objectives of improving health and wellbeing for all by re-providing appropriate accommodation for the core headquarters team of the department. It also supported the objective of creating an excellent Council by facilitating the sale of Westminster House and a consequent overall reduction in accommodation costs. It was noted that occupying space within Old Market House would incur annual revenue costs. These would however be more than covered by annual savings in accommodation costs made from the sale of Westminster House. Entering into the proposed agreement was not a statutory duty. An exempt appendix to the report contained information that was not for publication under paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This information would remain confidential because it explained the current position reached in negotiations which had yet to be concluded between the Council and a third party, where a particular course of action was recommended. It also contained financial information relating to the affairs of the third party.

Councillor S Holbrook informed that because of the urgency of this matter, he as the relevant Portfolio Holder, had asked for the decision to be made by the Cabinet this evening rather than by him, under his delegated powers, at a later date.

The Director requested that because of the urgent need to enter into the proposed agreement call-in be waived. The Interim Chief Executive indicated his agreement to this request.

**RESOLVED - That**

- (1) the terms proposed within this report, for the Council to occupy accommodation within Old Market House, Birkenhead, are agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management is authorised to complete the necessary documentation; and**
- (2) the call-in procedure in respect of this matter be waived in view of the urgent need to enter into the agreement.**

**335 URGENT BUSINESS - ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE**

Further to Minute No. 333 above, the Cabinet considered the appendix to the report on the agenda for the meeting that contained exempt information that, if disclosed, may provide information relating to the financial/business affairs of a third party.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the contents of the Appendix containing exempt information that cannot be considered in the presence of the press and public be noted.**