

LABOUR AMENDMENT – 2 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327

Refocusing priorities on Wirral’s most vulnerable residents.

Proposed by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny (3 minutes)

Council notes that the provision of Respite Care, Intermediate Care and Home Reablement services plays a key role in the Council’s strategy for reducing the numbers of elderly and vulnerable adults who require full time residential care.

Council further notes that these services also play a key role in reducing unnecessary bed blocking in Wirral’s hospitals.

Council recognises that over time the introduction of the Personalisation agenda where individuals can choose how they spend the budgets allocated to them may have an impact on the services currently offered.

Council also recognises that, in line with many other authorities, it faces unprecedented levels of cuts in resources, that it is legally obliged to set a balanced budget, and that it therefore has to take action in order to reduce its expenditure to meet the limited resources available.

Council understands, however, that change can be very disturbing and destabilising for the elderly, for individuals with dementia, for those with learning difficulties and for those with mental health needs, and consequently for their families and carers, and that this change needs to be managed very carefully.

Council acknowledges the representations it has received from service users, their families and from charities experienced in this area that the Council is moving too far too fast and the consequence is growing levels of fear and confusion with the attendant risk, in some cases, that a breaking point will be triggered, leading to higher levels of demand for more costly residential care.

In response to these representations, and in line with the statement from the Leader of the Council that he wishes to “invest further where necessary to protect those who are most vulnerable in society,” Council recommends the priorities in the budget are re-focused in the following way:

The HART service remains as an integrated in house unit	£760,000
Mapleholme stays open in line with the recommendations made at Cabinet in November 2009, following a lengthy and detailed consultation	£800,000
The closure of Pensall, Poulton, Meadowcroft and Fernleigh is postponed for a period of at least six months in order to ensure that appropriate and quality checked alternative services are in place and service users and their families have been properly	£990,000

consulted and are satisfied and familiar with any alternative arrangements that have been made.	
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In order to pay for this, Council recommends

Remaining Council Balances, following the implementation of the proposals in the budget and the use of 4.4m to pay for EVRs, are reduced from £6.8m to £6m, in line with the amount recommended as best practice by the District Auditor as a percentage of expenditure.	£800,000
In the light of the contribution of the Hart Service to reducing admissions to residential care, £166,000 is earmarked from the £2m allocated within the budget on page 5 to meet increasing demand for services for the elderly.	£166,000
In line with other services which are being asked in this budget to absorb £7.8m of inflationary costs, based on the current 4% increase in the consumer price index, the £400,000 allowance for inflation on the Biffa contract be removed. In order to avoid any appearance to the public of rewarding poor performance, particularly in winter weather, the Chief Officer be asked to absorb the consequences, with the suggestion that a more rigorous monitoring of the contract given past track records, and the application of penalties where standards are breached might prove helpful in this matter.	£400,000
In line with other areas where specific grant has not been replaced, the £202,000 grant for waste infrastructure be not replaced, but any essential needs be met from within existing resources of the Council or the contractor.	£202,000
In the light of real concerns that the implementation of the “Free after Three” parking scheme has been tested only over Christmas, when holiday shopping patterns are very different, and may well not increase trade but simply distort shopping patterns over a longer period of time, as well as changing the competitive position of smaller shopping areas like Bebington and New Ferry where shopping is still free, this initiative should be postponed until such time that a proper review of all appropriate consequences has taken place and the true cost or benefits of the scheme to Traders and the Council has been properly analysed.	£482,000
The Council’s new Big Society Unit be instructed to investigate how the deep cleansing of local and district shopping centres could be achieved under the principles of localism and the Big Society, by using the financial resources already available within Area Forums, or a combination of Area Forums, by recruiting willing clean up volunteers and by a rigorous enforcement by the Council and by residents and traders of current cleansing contracts.	£500,000

Council believes that these measures will not only benefit Wirral's most vulnerable residents, but will also make transparent the level of Health Authority Grant being paid back into Social Services, against a background of £13m of resources being removed, and demonstrate that the full £4.9m of grant is being used in the proper manner, (set against the £3.4m of grant currently evident in this budget.)