

**What  
Really  
Matters?**

Families and Wellbeing  
**Budget Options**  
**from the Chief Executive**

# The Budget Challenge in Wirral

## Dear Resident

I was appointed as Chief Executive to improve the way in which Wirral Council operates. My first task is to ensure we address the unprecedented budget challenge before us. Unprecedented cuts to Council funding from central Government, combined with unfunded increased demand for social care in particular, mean that we have no choice but to cut around a third of our net budget over the next three years.

These are tough times – for our staff, Councillors, and most importantly the people who we serve. We have some tough decisions to make over the coming months.

Today I publish my options for where savings might be found for Councillors, Partners, staff and the public to consider. I have sought to offer these options according to the overriding principle that we should spend less on ourselves, taking savings first from our ‘back office’ and so mitigating as much as possible the impact on services to residents particularly our poorest and most vulnerable.

These options also represent around 25% more than we need to save in this first year. That is to make sure that our Councillors, when they consider these options alongside your feedback, have the opportunity to make choices as they take these extremely difficult decisions. These savings are proposed as part of a three year drive, which will see the Council making building firm foundations for the future of the borough by transforming the way we work and provide services.

I am therefore firstly proposing to reduce our Senior Management costs by around a third. I am also consulting on reducing other staffing costs such as car mileage and phone bills.

In addition I am bringing forward options to make better use of our buildings and Information Technology. Importantly I am reviewing the amount of money spent on Agency Staff, Consultants, marketing and all other non essential spending.

Given the size of the budget gap this will not however be enough. The further options I put before you are not easy ones. Council services must change – there is no other way of finding the massive amount of money we need.

My pledge is that I will consult with staff, residents, community, voluntary and faith groups and businesses in order that we make the tough decisions we need to - taking your views and opinions into account.

**Graham Burgess,**  
Chief Executive.

# Family and Wellbeing Services in Wirral

**Perhaps the biggest responsibility any Council holds is the duty to protect its most vulnerable residents; adults, children and families.**

## A vision for Children's Services

The local authority's role in acting as a champion for children, supporting schools, shaping and commissioning services, assessing needs and delivering services to children is changing significantly. In the current climate of unprecedented financial austerity, it is imperative that the Council is clear about which services are essential and which are desirable. This is in order to determine which services and facilities can best be delivered by third parties, so that the local authority only delivers directly where it can evidence this represents value for money. Also, that the Council determines which services need public funding and which can be secured through other means.

This strategy emphasises the importance of developing coherent preventative services with partner agencies, which build on universal provision, so that we target interventions with children and families in order to improve outcomes and reduce the number of children requiring expensive and frequently reactive specialist services. Our role in the direct provision of universal services for children should be significantly diminished, or provided on a full cost recovery basis, since other agencies and communities

may be better placed to provide these services, and we must target our resources to work with more vulnerable children and families. However, our role in championing the needs of children, making sure that robust safeguarding processes are in place from top to bottom and across the breadth of the partnership, and making sure that the full range of services are available to meet children's universal needs in partnership with schools and others in their local communities, is as strong as ever.

Moving forward, we must increasingly "think family" to maximise opportunity for shared working across the Families and Wellbeing Directorate. For example, in providing transition support for children with a disability, working with troubled families, placing emphasis on the child and families journey, and through developing teams around families. We also need to configure services in a way which simplifies access, reduces unnecessary bureaucratic processes, and the associated management and back office costs.

There are opportunities through the reconfiguration of services to:

- Deliver well targeted early intervention and prevention; producing better outcomes for children and families and reduced costs in the longer term
- Focus on the child and families journey, not professional processes
- Determine which services and facilities need public funding and which can be secured through other means, so that public funding is targeted at the right people and the right organisations

# Family and Wellbeing Services in Wirral

- Reduce bureaucracy and complexity with single access routes
- Make sure that the Council policies are fit for the current climate
- Maximise partnership opportunities – shared priorities, funding and service delivery.

## A vision for Adult Social Care

The changing population, with rapidly increasing numbers of older and vulnerable people, together with changing aspirations and an environment of significantly reducing resources for Local Authorities, brings huge challenge for social care.

In order to meet these challenges we must transform the service offer; we must commission our services based on sound evidence, so that we know we are providing the best and most appropriate levels of care and support that is possible. This will help us to deliver more personalised services, and make sure that people can control their own circumstances, meet their own needs and stay independent for as long as they can.

Our commissioning approach is therefore the critical component of the Council's determination to deliver services in the most effective and efficient way. Adult Social Care is changing in order to focus increasingly on supporting people effectively. The changes are based on 6 key design principles.

Our aim is to ensure that for the people of Wirral:

- We will shift from focussing on crisis management in health and social care towards prevention and early intervention services that promote health, wellbeing and a good quality of life.
- We will work better across the Council and partners to offer information and advice that makes the support offer clearer and signposts people more effectively to a range of organisations including the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- Commissioning will deliver a broader range of integrated service solutions for people based on co-production and recognition of changing aspirations; this will lead to de-commissioning some traditional services as well as commissioning new ones.
- Commissioning will drive efficiency and ensure that we deliver Best Value for the people of Wirral.
- Safeguarding the dignity of vulnerable people and service quality will be at the core of our approach to commissioning.
- We will focus on delivering services locally and will build upon individual and community assets rather than deficits.

# Budget Options

The budget options in this report have been designed to try and improve the value for money which we are getting for our residents, but still making sure that the people who are receiving the service have the choice and opportunities to stay independent and safe.

These budget options have been developed by Council Officers and, as much as possible; we have tried to develop them to follow what you told us in the first stage of this consultation.

That consultation focussed on four main themes: raising income, changing service delivery, re-shaping services and stopping services. The options in this report also follow those four main themes.

For each of the options summarised in this report, you can find much more detailed information as to what likely impact they will bring by visiting our website at [www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/whatreallymatters) or calling us on 0151 606 2030.

## What You Told Us:

***“The Council should look to raise income through raising or introducing charges. Raising charges should take every step to not disadvantage or marginalise vulnerable groups by making services unaffordable, and the services selected for increased charges should be chosen carefully.”***

# Budget Options

## Option: Community Meals

Community Meals, or 'meals on wheels', have been a traditional part of adult social services for many years. It involves hot meals being delivered to a number of vulnerable residents every day. The service is appreciated by many, but there are some problems associated with it.

There is no choice involved in the Council service – people simply get what they are given, and it doesn't tend to cater for any special dietary requirements such as vegetarianism, or any religious considerations. There are now lots of alternative providers of ready meals that can offer much greater choice to people at a reasonable cost to the individual.

***The proposal is that the Council could increase the charges, to bring Wirral in line with other Councils, so the price paid covers the current cost, which would work out at 79p per meal, and replace the current contract with a smaller contract reflecting anticipated demands for the service.***

At the moment, people receiving community meals pay £2.68 per meal. The cost to the Council is £3.47 per meal.

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**Budget Saving: £75k increased income based on full cost recovery plus £125,000 reduction in spend**

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## Option: Assistive Technology

Around 4500 people in Wirral benefit from some type of assistive technology installed in their home; this includes things like bed occupancy sensors, property exit sensor, pull chords, flood detectors and fall detectors.

This equipment is currently installed free of charge, and the people who receive the service have the added benefit of 24/7 monitoring, again for no charge. People who receive these services normally receive additional benefits to cover additional costs. The value of the equipment ranges significantly, depending on the volume and type of support required but can cost up to £5,000.

***The option in this area is to provide the same service, to the same standard, but introduce a weekly charge of £3 per household, per week, regardless of the level of equipment installed within the house.***

The charge be assessed on an person's ability to pay.

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**Budget Saving:  
£300,000 increased income**

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# Budget Options

## Option: Charges for Non-Residential Services

The Council has the ability to charge people for the social care services they receive. These charges are for services which include home care, supported living, day care and transport.

***Most Councils charge for these services, and many Councils charge 100% of a person's disposable income. Wirral currently charges 75% of a person's disposable income and the option in this area is to increase this level to 100% from next year. This would also involve a reduction in the savings capital limit for non-residential care to the same level as those receiving residential care.***

This option will increase the contributions made for their care by vulnerable and elderly people. However, the charges are based entirely on a person's ability to pay, and will bring our levels of charges in line with other Councils in the North West.

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**Budget saving:  
£880k increased income**

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## What You Told Us:

***“The Council should make savings through changing the way services are delivered through outsourcing, sharing services or encouraging groups of staff to take over the running of services – as long as the Council kept the responsibility for the quality of the service.”***

# Budget Options

## Option: Review of contracts

This involves the review of contractual arrangements in three service areas:

### **Extra Care Housing**

The Council has worked with partners to provide over 200 units of extra care housing for older people across 5 locations in the borough. Extra Care Housing is a form of residential care or sheltered housing, whereby the resident lives with a high degree of independence but also receives constant support and protection.

***This option involves the Council re-tendering the contracts for these services to seek to provide a service at the same quality but with better value for money, with consideration of the projected huge increase in our elderly population in the coming years.***

### **Residential and Respite Care**

The Council is committed to working with people who use services, their families and carers, partners and providers to develop services and to encourage the market to deliver flexible and personalised respite and short term breaks. The introduction of block contract arrangements for a small number of short term care beds to facilitate assessments post hospital discharge has the potential to generate savings for the Council.

***The option involves the introduction of contract arrangements for a small number of short term care beds to help with providing assessments after a person has been discharged from hospital.***

### **Day Care**

The Council is committed to working with people who use services, their families and carers, partners and providers to develop services. The Council is developing a contracting framework for day care provided by independent sector providers. This may deliver efficiencies through improved commissioning and the opportunity to standardise daily rates.

***The option further proposes that the Council reviews its approach to commissioning day care provided by the independent sector to deliver efficiencies.***

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**Budget saving:**  
**£600,000**

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# Budget Options

## Option: Targeted Support

Wirral Council works closely with the NHS to provide a whole range of services for vulnerable adults. These include nursing care, residential care, and reablement among others. Reablement is where a person is supported back to full health following an illness or injury.

*The option in this area is to work with the NHS and reduce the use of higher cost services such as nursing and residential care homes and to jointly change services to work much more closely together in an integrated way. The main focus is on community based alternatives including Intermediate Care, reablement and assistive technology. The option also includes ensuring that multi disciplinary assessments are comprehensive and ensure individuals are provided with appropriate support.*

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**Budget saving: £3.95m savings and increased income**

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## Option: Residential and Respite Care

The Council currently owns 3 residential care homes providing respite and short breaks for people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. The service also provides four crisis beds for people with mental health issues. The in-house provision is expensive and the standard of the buildings is not as high as the Council would want for those it cares for.

*The option in this area would be to merge and improve the residential and respite care directly provided by the Council to one location, while closing the remaining two. More people will benefit from supported living arrangements rather than residential care.*

While this proposal may result in people who are currently living across two locations needing to move, due to potential closure the impact on the people and their carers can be minimised by making sure that alternative, responsive services are available from other providers. This option will result in people who need these services being given a greater choice than they currently receive with existing Council run facilities.

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**Budget saving: £320,000**

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# Budget Options

## Option: Day Care and Day Services Transformation

Currently, Wirral Council provides a number of Day Centres which support people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and mental health difficulties. The Council is exploring ways to deliver an improved, effective, efficient in-house service that can remain competitive, in terms of quality and cost. All of our day centres at the moment need substantial investment to varying degrees to bring them up to an acceptable quality standard.

***This option will involve the complete transformation of day services; which may result in investing in some centres to make them modern, fit for purpose and suitable to provide the best possible support, but would also mean the Council providing fewer centres.***

Whilst this proposal may result in the closure of some centres, individuals will still be able to access day services if they choose to do so whilst others, through a personal budget, may choose other ways to receive support. The demand for day services in the voluntary sector may increase as people exercise greater choice through personal budgets. The project to transform day services is developing a service model based on the needs and priorities of service users, with a particular focus on employment needs. The potential for Social Enterprises is also being explored.

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**Budget saving:  
£2 million**

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# Budget Options

## Option: Review of Support for Carers

In the process of conducting a community care assessment, a carer for an individual may be identified. The department has a duty to consider the needs of the carer as part of the overall assessment and the carer has the right to ask for a separate assessment of their own needs. As part of the current assessment process, a carer's assessment generates (through the Resource Allocation System) a carer's budget, a sum of money based on the nature and extent of the impact of the carer role on that individual. This can be paid as a direct payment to carers to support them in their carer role.

*The proposal is to review the current process and consider the efficacy of three alternative options:*

- *the cessation of personal budgets for carers with support for carers being commissioned by the department*
- *the introduction of an annual grant to carers*
- *the introduction of a payment to carers based on a banding system that reflects the impact of the carer role on the individual*

The NHS has also been given additional funding to support carers and NHS Wirral has recently commissioned the Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Diversity Carers Support Service to offer short breaks for carers. Carers are now able to access these services through GPs rather than through Adult Social Services.

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**Budget Saving:**  
**£250,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Transport Policies for Adults and Children**

The Council provides transport for well over a thousand people across the borough every day; travelling to Council facilities, schools and other services.

***This option will involve a full review of that transport, with a view to stopping providing transport to some or all Council services, and instead requiring the people using the services to either contribute to the cost of the transport or find other means.***

This option will result in a reduced transport service for children and adults. This may result in a potential impact on other Council services as a result of the change.

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**Budget saving:  
£832,000**

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## **Option: Area Teams for Family Support**

Area Teams provide preventative services for vulnerable children and families. The team and partners provide support to these children and families to prevent their situation getting worse. There is some duplication of effort due to the number of teams.

***The option in this area is to reduce the number of Area Teams from 11 to 4, and have them work across the borough based on need.***

The reorganisation will target services more effectively to meet the needs of children and families.

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**Budget saving:  
£200,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Schools Music Service**

The Council currently provides a Schools Music Service. The service has for many years received a small subsidy from the Council.

***The option in this area is to remove the subsidy and ensure that it brings in enough income to break even. This will be done through increased marketing and seeking sponsorship.***

The risks in this area are that young people may choose to use different services, these risks will be mitigated through promotion and targeting a wider client group.

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**Budget saving:  
£21,000**

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## **Option: Oaklands Outdoor Education Centre**

The Council currently delivers the Oaklands Outdoor Education Centre service. The service has for many years received a small subsidy from the Council.

***The option in this area is to remove the subsidy and ensure that it brings in enough income to break even. This will be done through increased marketing and seeking sponsorship.***

The risks in this area are that young people may choose to use different services, these risks will be mitigated through promotion and targeting a wider client group.

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**Budget saving:  
£23,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Educational Psychology Service**

The Council provides an educational psychology service, to help all children who have special educational needs.

***The option in this area is to reduce this service while continuing to meet statutory requirements. This will need a more targeted approach.***

Reducing the capacity of this service will have an impact on children, young people and their families who have additional educational needs.

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**Budget saving:  
£80,000**

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## **Option: Foundation Learning**

A programme is offered to schools to develop and then deliver Foundation Learning for those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET, which means not in education, employment or training.

***The option in this area is to stop this programme and target support from the Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance Service.***

This may impact on the Council's effectiveness in ensuring young people are in education, training or employment.

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**Budget saving:  
£133,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Universal and Targeted Commissioning of Parenting Services**

The Council invests money with organisations in the community and voluntary sector to provide parenting family support and advisory services, including where families are affected by poverty and disadvantage.

***The option here is to reduce and target these services at those families most at risk of poor outcomes.***

This might result in a reduction in the number of children, young people and their families receiving a service.

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**Budget saving:  
£900,000**

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## **Option: Schools Budget**

The Council has a budget for Planned Programmed Maintenance, which covers expenditure on maintenance work in schools. The Council also has a 27 year Private Finance Initiative agreement which relates to improvement work to 9 schools. The annual costs for this are covered by government grant, contributions from schools and the Council budget.

***The proposal in this area is to transfer costs currently met by the Council to the Schools Budget.***

While removing considerable pressure from the Council budget, this would mean schools would have to absorb the additional costs.

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**Budget saving:  
£2,750,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: School Improvement and Income from Academy Schools**

The focus of the school improvement service is on the core statutory duties of the local authority and traded service with schools for the services that are non-statutory. Over the last couple of years, Wirral has reviewed its statutory duties and costs in relation to its academy schools. Whilst some services have reduced, others are now trading with academies.

***This option is to reduce the level of non-traded school improvement support and training and increase income for those services provided to Academy Schools by increasing what the Council charges.***

The Council provides a number of services to Academy schools which are no longer under the control of the Council including educational social welfare and behaviour support. Applying additional charges would not impact on the quality of services provided to Academy schools. Applying charges to Academy schools would not impact on the quality of services provided.

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**Budget saving: £131,000 plus  
£60,000 in additional income**

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## **Option: Review of Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Grants**

The voluntary, community and faith sector provide a number of services such as luncheon clubs, advocacy support and day care with funding provided by the Council.

***The proposal is that the Council reviews these services as part of a wider Council approach to commission more targeted and cost effective services based on delivering prevention and early intervention services.***

This proposal will include a review of drugs and alcohol assessment and rehabilitation services to commission services that will deliver better outcomes for individuals and to promote harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation and recovery. This will include stopping funding for organisation core costs with the focus shifting to delivering improved outcomes for people.

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**Budget saving:  
£820,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Assessment and Care Management**

The Council is reviewing its assessment and care management process working closely with the NHS to improve the experience of care service users and make quicker the process from referral to support plan.

*The proposal is that through making the process more efficient, it would be possible to respond to financial pressures by reducing the number of social workers and assessment support workers, although it is accepted that this would potentially impact on the level of service provided.*

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**Budget saving:  
£500,000**

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## **Option: Review of Residential Care for Learning Disabilities**

Many Councils have changed their services for learning disabilities, and developed supported living opportunities as an alternative to residential care. The main principles of supported living are that people with learning disabilities own or rent their home and have control over the support they get, who they live with and how they live their lives.

*This option in this area is to develop supported housing arrangements for people with Learning Disabilities as an alternative to residential care.*

This option seeks to balance the needs of the people involved to increase choice and control, to redesign services that are out dated and not fit for purpose.

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**Budget saving:  
£300,000**

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# Budget Options

## Option: Review of Equipment Services

The Council provides equipment for people such as wheelchairs and frames.

***The option here would be to develop a shared service with the NHS to make a saving of £100,000 on VAT payments.***

This option would have no impact on the service.

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**Budget Saving:  
£100,000**

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## Option: Review of Emergency Duty

The Council is reviewing its arrangements in the way emergency duty, or 'out of hours', care management systems are developed.

***The proposal here is that the current arrangements are reviewed to investigate a shared service with the NHS.***

This option would have no impact on the service.

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**Budget Saving:  
£100,000**

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## What You Told Us:

***“The Council should look into the use of its buildings, and try to provide services from a smaller, more cost effective range of locations. The Council should try to make sure that no communities were left isolated if facilities near them were closed.”***

# Budget Options

## Option: Youth and Play Services

The Council provides and maintains 6 Play Schemes and 14 youth facilities, as well as extensive outreach projects. These services are available for all children and young people in the borough, and are also backed up with further services provided by the voluntary and community sector.

***The option in this area is to review provision of Play Schemes, reduce the outreach service and integrate all youth clubs in to the 4 main Youth Hubs, where services would be centralised. It is further proposed that the youth opportunity fund should be stopped. This fund provides opportunities for organisations to bid for funding to deliver projects for young people.***

This service will be aligned with the new Youth Zone planned for Birkenhead.

This would reduce the number of easily accessible youth facilities. There is potential for partners and the voluntary sector to provide services which would replace the reduction in Council services, which the Council could potentially help fund. The Council also plan to invest in a central Youth Zone to provide improved and alternative provision.

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**Budget saving:  
£1,183,000**

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## Option: Youth Challenge

Youth Challenge (Positive Activities for Young People) provides universal and targeted services to Young People – outreach, risk taking behaviour (alcohol, substance misuse), Big Nights, Arts and Drama.

***The option is to reduce the budget for these services.***

There may be a reduction in the number of young people taking part in positive activities. The Council would seek to ensure that services are accessible by continuing to target the more vulnerable and at risk young people.

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**Budget saving:  
£400,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Children's Centres and Sure Start**

Wirral has 16 Children's Centres and a number of smaller satellite centres. The centres provide a wide range of services, covering targeted specialised services as well as 'universal services'; and can be accessed by all young people and their families.

*The option here is to reduce universal services from children's centres and charge for most universal services which are provided. This would further include the release of a number of satellite children's centres including Manor Primary School, Bedford Drive Primary School, New Brighton Primary School, Lingham Primary School, Eastway Primary School, Hoylake Holy Trinity Primary School, Oxton and New Ferry bases.*

There are a number of proposals regarding Children's Centres, and the reduction of the Sure Start budget, all of which are designed to protect the specialised, targeted services for the most vulnerable families.

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**Budget saving:  
£2,172,000**

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# Budget Options

## What You Told Us:

***“You said we should look at non-universal, optional services and investigate if they could be reduced or stopped.”***

# Budget Options

## **Option: Help and Advice for Older People**

The Council provides a service for people who are over 65, which is called the 'promoting older people's independence network', or 'POPIN'. This service is about giving older people support about benefits, and how to access other voluntary and Council services.

***The option in this area is to stop providing the service, and investigate using voluntary and community organisations to provide the service on our behalf.***

This service aims to increase independence, improve access to health and wellbeing services, and also to delay the need for more intensive care as people get older.

It's also true that voluntary and community organisations are already providing similar services and could fill the gap that this service leaves behind. In addition Council One Stop shops can offer similar advice and information.

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**Budget saving:  
£350,000**

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## **Option: Careers, Education Information, Advice and Guidance**

The Council provides a wide range of careers advice to young people across the borough, including 1:1 information and advice to vulnerable and NEET young people, providing an interactive web portal offering information on career choices and providing tailored training programmes.

***The option in this area would be to redesign and reduce these services, to ensure the targeted work still took place at the level defined by the Council's statutory duties.***

The service would be redesigned to ensure that those people at greatest risk of becoming NEET were targeted to receive the most support.

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**Budget saving:  
£1,000,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities**

The Council provides funding for children with disabilities to go on short breaks, which provide respite both for the children but also their carers and / or families. These services are all bought in from the private and voluntary sector.

***The option in this area would be to reduce the number and range of the short breaks which are funded for children with disabilities.***

This change will mean the budget can be planned more effectively, and that the Council can make sure we only 'buy' the services we need, it will also mean that less money will be invested with the voluntary sector and young people will not have the same choice or access to the service they get at the moment.

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**Budget saving:  
£300,000**

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## **Option: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

This is a comprehensive specialist service to children and adolescents who require mental health support. The service is provided in addition to statutory health provision and involves additional support being provided to children in need, children in care, children with a plan for adoption and children with a disability. Additionally, CAMHS has direct responsibility for delivering a specialist fostering programme, Fostering Futures, for some of the most vulnerable children in care.

***This option is to reduce the service by a third.***

There is a risk that some of the more vulnerable children, young people and families will not receive timely therapeutic intervention in response to their needs.

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**Budget saving:  
£250,000**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Revenues and Benefits**

The Council's Revenues and Benefits Service is responsible for the calculation and payment of benefits of approximately £160 million, as well as other income including the financial assessment, charging and recovery of accommodation and support charges.

The service is also responsible for the raising, administration and collection of £350 million gross income from Council Tax, Business Rates and Accounts Receivable invoices. This includes amounts funded from Council Tax benefits and other relief.

***This option is to reduce staffing levels in line with the impact of changes to the welfare system.***

This option is about rationalising the approach to delivering the service in light to changes of the welfare system whilst continuing to deliver a statutory level of service.

***Further options in this area are to raise income by increasing the court costs the Council charges to its debtors from £65 to £75, and reviewing the Council Tax discounts and/or exemptions in place for empty properties, households over 70 years of age and those on low incomes as well as Discretionary Rate Relief.***

The Council would need to consider how this option would impact on residents, debtors, social and private landlords and the local economy. Changes have the potential to impact financially on all the above, apart from those defined as vulnerable.

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**Budget Saving:  
up to £11 million**

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# Budget Options

## **Option: Libraries and One Stop Shops**

Wirral Council has a network of 13 community One Stop Shops in convenient locations throughout the borough. Services accessible via One Stop Shops include Adult Social Services, Anti-Social Behaviour team, Blue Badge scheme, Council Tax, Consumer Advice, education and welfare benefits, electoral register, Family Information Service, Fire Service, Housing Options service and home improvements, Housing and Council Tax Benefit, Housing for rent via Property Pool Plus, job applications, Job Points, Leisure Services, Licensing, NHS Services, parking fines and appeals, payments, Pest Control / Environmental Health, Recycling, Rubbish and Waste, Registrar Services, Tell Us Once, Tourism and Wirral Partnership Homes.

The Council's 24 libraries deliver a face to face service across the borough from a number of locations and offer reference facilities, an audio-visual service, home reader service, exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, study areas and a coffee area.

A programme is now underway to bring together Wirral's libraries and One Stop Shop service. The benefits to the Council and the public in merging One Stop Shops and libraries include staff being generically trained to offer a wider range of enquiries.

***The options in this area include: further merging of libraries and One Stop Shops, the reduction of opening hours, particularly around Christmas and New Year, and the increased use of volunteers in the running of the facilities. The option of community asset transfer will also be part of this option. The Council also propose to reduce the book fund.***

Further mergers would result in a reduction in the number of staff required at each merged site, as well as potential costs for improvements to merged buildings. Further library and One Stop Shop mergers would compliment the work already underway with a number of pilot sites and further enable users to access a number of services at one location. The option is unlikely to affect the council's statutory responsibility for providing a library service.

A reduction of opening hours will impact on staffing resources and require consultation with them, as well as users and partners. A reduction in Christmas and New Year opening hours would have minimum impact on library users. A single one stop shop will remain open during the period for emergency contact.

The option could also impact on our staff, users, partners and voluntary organisations. A high level of consultation would therefore be required. The service will look into other service delivery alternatives, such as working with partners and local groups, as well as maximising the use of volunteers.

# Budget Options

A reduction in the book fund has the potential to impact on member satisfaction and service reputation.

An e-book service is now available which may replicate 'hard copy' books available. The service will ensure statutory levels of books remain.

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**Budget Saving:**  
**£629,000**

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