

APPENDIX TWO

BUDGET OPTIONS FEEDBACK: REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT

1.0 SUMMARY

The majority of options contained within this theme related to services provided through the Regeneration, Housing and Planning and Technical Services Departments, including parks and countryside, leisure, car parking, highways and waste collection among others.

The options are presented in this report, together with the quantitative data gathered through the consultation questionnaire, a summary of any related comments received through the consultation process and, where applicable, further consultation which has taken place.

2.0 BUDGET OPTIONS

2.1 CAR PARKING

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Car Park charges vary extensively across Wirral. It is much more expensive, for example, to park in Birkenhead than in West Kirby. The proposal here is to standardise car parking charges across the borough, and reduce the 'all day' charge to a competitive rate of £2.50, and bring in annual and seasonal permit rates in outer Birkenhead car parks. This would also involve reducing staffing across the service.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 63.5% | 3144 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 22.8% | 1131 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 13.7% | 677 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

There was a mixture of responses in relation to parking. Some people believe that raising charges would have a negative impact on businesses, while others agreed that the same charges should be applied across the borough.

OPTION SUMMARY

Some concerns were raised in the free text comments which related to this option, but overall the consultation is demonstrating strong support for implementing this option.

2.2 GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

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Garden waste is currently collected free of charge from Wirral residents. The option here is to stop the free kerbside collection of waste and begin charging for the service. On average, Councils who charge for this service charge in the region of £35 per year.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 26.2% | 1308 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 22.1% | 1101 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 51.7% | 2583 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

A small number of comments agreed with the charge, provided it was optional and not mandatory. However, a number of comments received stated that this option could result in an increase in fly tipping.

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of this option show a slight majority, 51.7%, oppose implementing this option. Over 100 respondents left comments related to this option, a summary of which is provided above.

2.3 HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The 'ERIC' service is available for people to have items of large household waste collected and disposed of. The current charge for this service is £20 per collection; this option would involve raising this charge to £26.50 per collection.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 43.4% | 2161 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 27.4% | 1367 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 29.2% | 1452 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

This option received similar comments as were received relating to Garden Waste, in that there was a risk that increasing charges could result in an increase in fly tipping.

OPTION SUMMARY

Although a small number of comments raised concerns about this option, the final results of the consultation show relatively strong

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support for its implementation, with almost three quarters of the total response stating that they would either support or accept an increased charge.

2.4 PRE-PLANNING ADVICE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council currently provides pre-planning application advice free of charge, many other Local Authorities across Merseyside charge. The option here is to introduce a fee for all pre-planning advice.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 56.7% | 2796 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 30.4% | 1497 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 12.9% | 635 |

OPTION SUMMARY

This option was considered and recommended by Cabinet in December 2012. The results of the final consultation show strong support for this option, with over 55% of respondents stating they support, and over 30% stating that they 'accept' its implementation.

2.5 APPRENTICE PROGRAMME

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council has for the past few years funded 167 people to complete Apprenticeships, with a further 114 positions available during the current financial year. There are 2 options available, the first to remove the budget for this programme, which would end the Wirral Apprentice Programme in its current form; and the second to reduce the budget to this programme, and explore opportunities to develop a Liverpool City Region Apprentice scheme.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| Remove the budget for this programme | 12.0% | 560 |
| Reduce the budget for the programme and develop a Liverpool City Region scheme | 88.0% | 4099 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

People commenting here believed that in the current economic climate every effort should be made to maintain or increase investment in employment and training.

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OPTION SUMMARY

Final results relating to this option show strong support from respondents to the second option of reducing the budget for the programme, and exploring the development of a Liverpool City Region scheme.

2.6 HANDYPERSON SCHEME

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council runs a handyerson scheme, which is open to all residents and means people can request maintenance on their homes for a relatively cheap price. The option is to redevelop this service, meaning it is targeted more effectively at people who have recently been discharged from hospital, reducing the service available to the general public.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 48.7% | 2410 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 31.1% | 1541 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 20.2% | 999 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The final results of the consultation show strong support for this option, with just over 20% of respondents stating that they believe it is unacceptable.

2.7 RESTRUCTURE OF RHP DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This option involves a service restructure in the Regeneration, Housing and Planning division, as a result of some significant changes which have led to a reconsideration of the work of the department.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 55.8% | 2618 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 34.9% | 1637 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 9.3% | 435 |

OPTION SUMMARY

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This option was considered and recommended by Cabinet on 20 December 2012. The final results of the consultation show strong support for this option, with less than 10% of respondents stating that they believe it is unacceptable.

2.8 KENNELS SERVICE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council operates a kennels service, which serves to re home abandoned and stray dogs. This option would involve closing the specific Wirral service and instead providing a joint service with partners across Merseyside. This would mean residents having to travel to Halewood to collect their dogs.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 39.2% | 1939 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 22.0% | 1087 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 38.9% | 1924 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Relocating the dog kennels to Halewood was unpopular among people making comments in this section, who highlighted the excellent performance and importance of the Wirral kennels.

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of the consultation show relatively strong support for this option, with almost 40% supporting its implementation and over 20% stating they would accept it. However, some comments and letters expressed concern about the impact of this option; suggestions were received from the Friends of Birkenhead Kennels organisation, and a petition has also been received opposing the option.

2.9 HOME INSULATION

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Warmer Wirral programme provides free or reduced cost home insulation for Wirral residents. There are two options in this area:

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Option One: Remove the budget for the programme. | 27.2% | 1322 |
| Option Two: Reduce the budget for the programme, allowing for some energy | 72.8% | 3536 |

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| efficiency and fuel poverty work to continue. | | |
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OPTION SUMMARY

This option was considered and recommended by Cabinet on 20 December 2012. The results of this option show strong support for reducing the budget for the programme, while still allowing for some energy efficiency and fuel poverty work to continue.

2.10 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Environmental Health team perform a wide range of duties related to the health, wellbeing and safety of the borough. This option involves developing a partnership with Cheshire West and Chester to put a mutual organisation together to deliver the service.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 51.0% | 2474 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 32.3% | 1570 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 16.7% | 811 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of the consultation show strong support for this option, with over 50% of respondents supporting its implementation.

2.11 TRADING STANDARDS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Within the Trading Standards team there are a number of officers who are responsible for providing support to vulnerable customers. This budget option involves reducing this service and will lead to a reduction in staff.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 26.0% | 1272 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 36.7% | 1791 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 37.3% | 1821 |

OPTION SUMMARY

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The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with almost 40% opposing its implementation but over 25% stating they would support and over 35% saying they would accept a reduction in the team.

2.12 PEST CONTROL

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Pest Control service provides a treatment service to residents and companies. The option in this area involves reducing the service, which will lead to a reduction in staff.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 24.0% | 1175 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 36.8% | 1806 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 39.2% | 1920 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with almost 40% opposing its implementation but just under 25% stating they would support and over 35% saying they would accept a reduction.

2.13 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council has a contract in place to cover all highway maintenance, which is soon going to be re-tendered. This option would reduce the proactive maintenance of roads, footways, signage and street furniture, and mean the Council would focus most resources on maintenance where there is a direct safety issue.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 23.9% | 1175 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 30.1% | 1483 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 46.0% | 2263 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Comments here were concerned that reductions would lead to safety issues. Investments in unnecessary road signs were also highlighted as areas where savings could be made.

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OPTION SUMMARY

The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with over 45% opposing its implementation but almost 25% stating they would support and 30% saying they would accept a reduction in proactive maintenance.

2.14 STREET LIGHTING

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council operates a scheme whereby people perform lighting inspections at night. This option would involve stopping these night-time inspections and also, where it is safe to do so, switching off lighting either completely or for part of the night.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 37.6% | 1860 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 32.0% | 1583 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 30.5% | 1508 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The final results of the consultation show relatively strong support for this option, with over 35% stating they would accept its implementation.

2.15 HIGHWAYS DRAINAGE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council performs regular maintenance work across drainage inspections on the highways, ensuring that risk of flooding is brought as low as possible. This option would reduce the service, and mean focusing the activity on targeted inspections at problem sites.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 22.7% | 1115 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 35.6% | 1750 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 41.7% | 2049 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with 40% opposing its implementation, and comments highlighting further

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concerns, but over 20% stating that they would support and over 35% stating they would accept a reduction in pro-active maintenance.

2.16 STREET CLEANSING

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council, through its contractor, invests a significant amount of resources in collecting litter and cleaning the streets. This option would involve reducing that investment, and working with the community to improve levels of street cleanliness. If successful, this reduction would be rolled out across other areas.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 21.8% | 1071 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 34.2% | 1680 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 44.0% | 2161 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with 44% opposing its implementation, and comments highlighting further concerns, but over 20% stating they would support and almost 35% stating they would accept its implementation.

2.17 SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Council provides school crossing patrol sites across the borough. This option would involve inviting schools to pay for the crossing patrol service and removing the cost to the Council. If schools are not prepared to pay for the service then it may be removed.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 32.2% | 1598 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 22.2% | 1103 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 45.5% | 2257 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Concerns were expressed regarding the potential impact to safety, and did not believe crossing patrols should be removed. A number of people also commented however that crossing patrols should not be in place where there is already a pedestrian crossing.

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OPTION SUMMARY

The final consultation results show a mixed reaction to this option, with 45.5% opposing its implementation but over 30% stating they would support and over 20% stating they would accept its implementation.

2.18 REMOVAL OF THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Wirral has over 200 sites which are classified as being 'parks and open spaces', which are a mixture of large and local parks, general green spaces, beaches and bowling greens. This option would involve stopping maintenance on a number of parks, green spaces, beaches and grass verges and working with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 14.5% | 725 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 26.6% | 1328 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 58.9% | 2948 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Parks, and particularly bowling greens, were highlighted as being important to the quality of life of our residents. Comments stated that they would support a reduction, but not a removal, of the service. A number of letters and emails have also been received, particularly from bowling clubs and teams, expressing opposition to this option.

ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION

The Friends of the Parks were notified about the saving options in the Parks and Countryside Service via email in early November and given the links to the on line consultation and access to paper copies of the consultation. In addition staff consulted with the Friends Groups at individual meetings, with the Friends of Parks Steering Group and at the Parks Forum in December.

Bowling clubs were contacted by e-mail or telephone in early November to inform them that one of the options was the cessation of the maintenance of the bowling greens. Council officers attended the Annual General Meeting of the Crown Green Bowling clubs in November to inform them of the options. Generally the clubs appreciated being contacted, and said they would let their members know and complete the online questionnaire.

The Friends of Parks, Crown Green Bowling Clubs and coastal and biodiversity groups were more in favour of the £450K saving option

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(Section 2.19 of this report) and were opposed to the £850K withdrawal of maintenance option.

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of the consultation, together with letters and emails from residents and user groups, demonstrate opposition to the option to remove all maintenance, but would accept the option relating to reducing the maintenance of Parks.

2.19 REDUCTION IN THE MAINTENANCE OF PARKS

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This further option relating to parks involves the reduction of maintenance whereby some areas will be cut every three weeks, rather than two, a reduction in bedding displays and the pre-planned maintenance programme. Rural grass verges would also be left for wildlife and only cut where there is a road safety issue. The Council would work with community organisations and 'friends of parks' groups to ensure the service was maintained.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 30.1% | 1501 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 37.9% | 1894 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 32.0% | 1598 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of this option show relatively strong support for reducing the service. 30% would support the implementation of this option, and over 35% would accept it.

2.20 HOUSING SUPPORT FOR BME COMMUNITIES

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Part of the Council's supporting people team is a small service which helps to provide support for people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to live independently. The option here is to remove this service, as other services both from the community and public sectors, including the Citizen's Advice Bureau, could potentially fill the gap.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|--|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 61.1% | 2987 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely | 26.8% | 1311 |

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| necessary | | |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 12.0% | 588 |

OPTION SUMMARY

The results of this question show strong support for the implementation of this option, with over 60% stating they would support, and 26.8% stating that they would accept the removal of this service.

2.21 SUPPORTING PEOPLE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The supporting people programme delivers services to around 5,500 Wirral residents; making sure that those people with housing-related needs are supported. This option would involve reducing this budget through renegotiating contracts, tendering services, remodelling and closing services.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 35.0% | 1702 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 35.7% | 1736 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 29.3% | 1426 |

OPTION SUMMARY

Again, the results of this question provide relatively strong support for this option – with 35% stating they would support and a further 35% stating they would accept its implementation.

2.22 INVESTING IN WIRRAL'S BUSINESSES

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Wirral Council runs a service called Invest Wirral, which is designed to provide a wide range of business support services. The option here would be the reduction in support to businesses through a number of avenues, including business investments, grants and other funds. These funds may be replaced regionally. This option would also reduce duplication with other services by removing the Invest Wirral events budget and social enterprise support.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 47.1% | 2256 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 37.3% | 1788 |

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| I find this completely unacceptable | 15.6% | 750 |
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OPTION SUMMARY

The results of this question show strong support for this option, with almost 50% of respondents stating that they would support its implementation.

2.23 COMMUNITY PATROL AND DOG FOULING

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Wirral Community Patrol consists of more than 20 officers who work towards improving the security and safety of Wirral Council properties but also making Wirral a safe place to live, work and visit. The Council also provide a Dog Fouling Enforcement Team which aim to improve and protect the Wirral environment by reducing dog fouling. The option is to stop paying enhanced salaries for evening and weekend work for Community Patrol, except for bank holidays, and also to reduce the size of the dog fouling enforcement team.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 34.3% | 1687 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 30.8% | 1511 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 34.9% | 1715 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Comments in this section focussed on enforcement, with a number of people believing that the dog fouling team is not visible enough at present and that therefore there is not enough of a deterrent. A further theme in this area was to increase the fines and make the team self sufficient.

OPTION SUMMARY

The consultation is demonstrating relatively strong support for this option. The only real concerns highlighted regularly were related to dog fouling, and a number of suggestions to improve performance were made.

2.24 MODERNISATION OF LEISURE

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Currently, Leisure Centres across Wirral have periods where usage is extremely low, compared to the number of staff working at the sites. The option in this area is to make a number of changes to pool operating times and working practices, including closing Europa Leisure Pool and Guinea Gap Pool during less busy times, and

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reducing the staff requirements for the sauna operation at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre among others.

| Answer Options | Response Percent | Response Count |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| I support this under the circumstances | 42.3% | 2081 |
| I accept this if it is absolutely necessary | 36.3% | 1786 |
| I find this completely unacceptable | 21.5% | 1057 |

QUESTIONNAIRE COMMENTS

Comments were concerned that reducing the availability of leisure centres would have a potentially detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of the borough.

OPTION SUMMARY

Some concerns were highlighted through comments related to this option, but the results of this question show strong support, with over 40% supporting and over 35% accepting its implementation.