

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## BUDGET CABINET

18 FEBRUARY 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>BUDGET OPTIONS: REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>YES</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report documents progress in relation to the implementation of the Council's consultation programme "What Really Matters", initiated by Cabinet in June 2012.
- 1.2 The report presents budget options for Cabinet recommendation to Council. These options form part of the strategic directorate of Regeneration and Environment, and as such fall under the management of the Department of Regeneration, Housing and Planning and the Technical Services Department.
- 1.3 These options have been subject to comprehensive and robust public, staff, service user and partner consultation, the results of which were reported to Cabinet on 7 February 2013. Cabinet is also referred to all reports and minutes relating to these budget options as referred to in Subject History.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 In November 2012, Cabinet instructed the Chief Executive to publish and then consult in relation to a series of budget options, designed to enable the Council to begin the process of making savings of £109 million over the next three years. Cabinet further resolved that a number of principles, which were detailed in the resolution, should be paramount in the design of those options.
- 2.2 The Chief Executive further outlined in communications to residents and the Council workforce that the budget options have been designed to, as much as possible, mitigate the impact on the 'front line' and look to the back office for savings.
- 2.3 These principles, combined with the changing public demands and expectations in relation to service delivery for these departments, the current economic climate in a wider sense and the unprecedented financial challenges the Council is facing, have contributed to the development of a new vision for how services in these areas will and should be delivered in Wirral, which form a further basis for the publication of these options.

### 3.0 ECONOMY AND REGENERATION SERVICES

- 3.1 Wirral's local environment and economy are some of the biggest factors in driving the quality of life, health and levels of achievement for our residents. Our services are

aimed at ensuring Wirral is a place where businesses flourish and people have access to jobs and quality affordable homes.

- 3.2 In order to achieve this, it is vital that the Council continues to support a thriving local economy which provides the bedrock for social, economic and environmental well being amongst all of our Communities. We want to continue to support business growth, but to do so in a more focused manner that works with and utilises the experience and resources of other key stakeholders. We want to support the creation of jobs by the Private Sector through providing a supportive and enabling environment, not only through the day to day support provided by the Council, but also through speedy and appropriate use of the Council's Planning powers.
- 3.3 Having a quality and affordable place to live is important to ensure that all our residents live in a safe and appropriate home that allows them to gain maximum benefit for access to jobs, leisure, amenities, education and to gain associated social and economic benefits that they both desire and deserve. We will continue to work with Registered Social landlords and Private Sector landlords to maximise the number and range of quality homes for rent. We will continue our programmes to restructure the Housing Market and work with House Builders to increase the number of new homes built in Wirral.
- 3.4 In what are tough economic times for both the Council and the nation as a whole, we must ensure that the limited resource available maximises the opportunities to achieve our vision for Wirral. It is therefore necessary to focus continuing resources into areas that will have most impact, when maximising the opportunity to utilise other resources available. We have to make some difficult decisions as we simply do not have the resources to continue spending the same amounts to achieve these goals.
- 3.5 However, the Council will continue to allocate its own resources into activities that will help support business, create jobs, allow access to those jobs for Wirral residents and allow people to live in safe, affordable and relevant housing.

#### **4.0 ENVIRONMENT SERVICES**

- 4.1 Wirral Council has a responsibility for commissioning or delivering a range of near-universal services to all households and neighbourhoods in their area. These include, amongst others, waste and recycling, street cleansing, highway maintenance and traffic management, road safety, leisure services, parks and open spaces.
- 4.2 Increasingly, these functions have been carried out in various partnership or collaborative arrangements with other public agencies (e.g. police and fire service) or, where appropriate, with volunteer or other community groups.
- 4.3 It is recognised that there is projected to be a steady decline over the foreseeable future in national resources to support these types of services.
- 4.4 Increasingly, there will be a clear need to manage demand and, more generally, to manage public expectations of what the Council can and cannot do. The role of community and other groups will increase in significance as the Council itself diminishes its activities in the more discretionary areas where it is not required by statute to provide services or functions.

- 4.5 Many of what are now universal services are provided as a result of statutory requirements but where the actual level or quality of service is not closely defined. Other services which people are used to seeing as universal have a greater or lesser degree of discretion as to whether they are provided at all and to what level of provision.
- 4.6 It will be necessary to identify service areas that are not, as such, universal across the community but meet particular needs. These more targeted service areas are often those where council provision sits alongside or competes with other providers.

## 5.0 BUDGET OPTIONS: REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT

### 5.1 CAR PARKING

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 281	£ -	£ -	£ 281

This option involves standardising car parking charges across Wirral, reducing the all day charge to £2.50 and the introduction of annual and season permits in outer Birkenhead car parks. This option would also result in a reduction in maintenance and collection across the service.

### 5.2 GARDEN WASTE COLLECTION

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 582	£ 176	£ 393	£ 1,151

This option would involve replacing the existing garden waste collection service with a chargeable opt-in service from April 2013.

### 5.3 HOUSEHOLD WASTE COLLECTION

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 80	£ -	£ -	£ 80

This option would involve increasing Council income through increasing the charge for the ERIC service from £20 per collection to £26.50 per collection.

### 5.4 PRE-PLANNING ADVICE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 10	£ -	£ -	£ 10

This option would involve increasing Council income through introducing a charge for pre-planning advice to developers. This option was recommended by Cabinet on 20 December 2012.

## 5.5 APPRENTICE PROGRAMME

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 420	£ -	£ -	£ 420

This option will, if accepted, result in the Council re-providing its current bespoke Apprentice scheme through a partnership with Liverpool City Region colleagues.

## 5.6 HANDYPERSON SCHEME

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 209	£ -	£ -	£ 209

This option will involve redeveloping the handyman scheme, and ensuring it is targeted only at those who have recently been discharged from hospital.

## 5.7 RESTRUCTURE OF RHP DEPARTMENT

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 263	£ -	£ -	£ 263

This option would involve a restructure of the Regeneration, Housing and Planning department due to changes in policy, European funding and divisional and Council priorities. This option was recommended by Cabinet on 20 December 2012.

## 5.8 KENNELS SERVICE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s

£ 50	£ 50	£ -	£ 100
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The budget option for the Council Kennels/Dog Warden Service proposed that the service should join the Merseyside Consortium.

## 5.9 HOME INSULATION

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 926	£ -	£ -	£ 926

This option would involve reducing the budget for home insulations and instead focussing the team on fuel poverty and energy efficiency work. This option was accepted by Cabinet on 20 December 2012.

## 5.10 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 45	£ 63	£ -	£ 108

This option involves developing a shared service, or mutual organisation, with Cheshire West and Chester Council to re-providing the service.

## 5.11 TRADING STANDARDS

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 71	£ -	£ -	£ 71

This option involves re-structuring the Trading Standards division in order to achieve a reduction in staff and savings.

## 5.12 PEST CONTROL

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 30	£ -	£ -	£ 30

This option involves the deletion of a vacant post within the Pest Control division, and a further restructure of the team. This option was accepted by Cabinet on 20 December 2012.

### 5.13 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 588	£ -	£ -	£ 588

This option will rationalise pro-active highway maintenance work and ensure resources are primarily focussed on safety issues.

### 5.14 STREET LIGHTING

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 265	£ -	£ -	£ 265

This option will rationalise street lighting maintenance and also involve switching lights off, where it would not present a safety issue.

### 5.15 HIGHWAY DRAINAGE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 106	£ -	£ -	£ 106

This option will involve targeting drainage work at problem sites only.

### 5.16 STREET CLEANSING

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 1,000	£ (250)	£ -	£ 750

This option would involve changing street cleansing frequencies at targeted sites, potentially leading to an expansion of the project across wider areas of the borough. Having reviewed the option, it has been determined by officers that the pilot would not realise the savings envisioned. Therefore the proposal is to immediately implement changed cleansing frequencies.

## 5.17 SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 330	£ -	£ -	£ 330

This option would involve requiring schools to fund crossing patrols on a discretionary, opt-in basis, therefore removing the need for the Council to fund the service.

## 5.18 REMOVAL OF PARKS MAINTENANCE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 850	£ -	£ -	£ 850

This option would involve removing the maintenance on over 100 parks and open spaces, beaches, grass verges and other sites and working with community organisations to replace the service.

## 5.19 REDUCTION OF PARKS MAINTENANCE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 450	£ -	£ -	£ 450

This option would involve a review of the frequency of maintenance, with some areas being cut once every three weeks rather than two, and other areas being left for wildlife or only cut where there is a direct safety issue.

## 5.20 HOUSING SUPPORT FOR BME COMMUNITIES

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 111	£ -	£ -	£ 111

This option will, if accepted, result in the Council no longer providing this service directly and instead re-provide the service through existing Supporting People contracts and the voluntary, community and faith sectors.

## 5.21 SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
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£	£	£	£
-	2,000	-	2,000

This option will, if accepted, result in the Council seeking to re-negotiate contracts within this service in order to achieve savings.

## 5.22 INVESTING IN WIRRAL BUSINESSES

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 352	£ -	£ -	£ 352

This option will involve restructuring the Invest Wirral team to remove duplication. This option was recommended by Cabinet on 20 December 2012.

## 5.23 DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 162	£ -	£ -	£ 162

This option will reduce the dog fouling enforcement team and seek alternative ways of providing the service.

## 5.24 MODERNISATION OF LEISURE

2013/14 £000s	2014/15 £000s	2015/16 £000s	TOTAL £000s
£ 429	£ -	£ -	£ 429

This option will, if accepted, result in the activity programme within all Wirral leisure centres being re-designed to suit usage.

## 6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 6.1 A project team was established and met weekly to develop and deliver a project plan, with robust risk assessment arrangements. The key risk for this project is that failure to deliver a successful consultation project will leave the Council unable to develop a corporate or financial plan and make the budget savings required in 2013/14.

## 7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 7.1 These options are presented to Cabinet by the Chief Executive based on the principles resolved by Cabinet in November 2012. The Council is required to save approximately £109 million over the next three years and as such no other options were considered.



## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 Comprehensive programmes of consultation and engagement have been completed in relation to each of the budget options outlined within this report. The mechanisms and feedback from the consultation process was reported in detail to Cabinet on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 and is further summarised within this report.

## **9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

9.1 The options within this report contain numerous opportunities to increase partnership working and commissioning within the voluntary, community and faith sector. Consultation and discussions with key organisations within the sector are continuing to ensure these opportunities are maximised.

## **10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

10.1 This project has been delivered using existing resources through a cross-departmental project team.

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Recent case law has made it clear that any consultation undertaken must be meaningful, informed and reasonable. Failure to ensure this could lead to legal challenge and any decision taken which takes into account the consultation could be undermined and open to challenge by way of Judicial Review. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 came into force in April 2009 and introduced a duty for local authorities to involve, inform and consult with their communities. The duty is wide-ranging and applies to the delivery of services, policy and decision making and means the Council must consult relevant individuals, groups, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders that the Authority considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, their actions and functions.

## **10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for each of the budget options described within this report. Use the following hyperlink to access these assessments:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/budget-options-eias>

## **11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 A number of potential budget options, including the changed use of buildings across the borough, could bring benefits in terms of carbon reductions.

## **12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 Potential community safety implications based on budget options.

## **13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

13.1 That Cabinet notes the principles upon which the budget options have been developed.

13.2 That Cabinet makes recommendations on which budget options should be accepted as savings, and as such be recommended to Budget Council, in the context of the Council being required to find savings of £109 million over the next three years.

**14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

14.1 Failure to agree significant savings for 2013/14 will leave the Council unable to set a legal budget.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Peter Timmins  
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**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> February 2013</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> December 2012</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup> November 2012</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> July 2012</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> June 2012</b>