

APPENDIX ONE

BUDGET OPTIONS FEEDBACK: TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The options within this strategic directorate are presented in this report, together with the quantitative data gathered through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of any related comments received through the consultation process.
- 1.2 Options in this area primarily relate to 'Corporate' budget options, as such relating to either back office functions or cross-Council staff structures. Other options in this area relate to Council Tax; in terms of discounts and collection.

2.0 TRANSFORMING WIRRAL COUNCIL

Proposed Savings:

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
3111	2500	5611

Option Summary:

- 2.1 The role of Local Government is changing at the most rapid pace in living memory; as more and more funding is removed, Councils are being forced to totally re-evaluate the way they do business – what services they continue to provide, what they outsource to the private and voluntary sector and what services are no longer available.
- 2.2 We intend to pro-actively respond to the changing needs of our communities through remodelling Wirral Council to ensure we are able to deliver the most sustainable, effective, targeted services for our communities possible.
- 2.3 We will address the structure and makeup of the entire Council by working with staff to transform our workforce – its structure, its skills, its priorities and its size. We will totally re-evaluate, re-design and re-structure the organisation. At the end of next year Wirral Council's funding will have been reduced by around one third – the size of our workforce does not reflect this.
- 2.4 This option would see the workforce reduced in a targeted, strategic fashion, taking an equitable and fair approach to staff regardless of service area. This important exercise will deliver a flexible, fit for purpose organisation better able to adapt to the changing demands of our residents at a time of rapidly diminishing resources. This will also mean that even deeper cuts will not be made in front line services. We will also invest in support and training for our staff during this difficult

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transition period. This would also lead to a reduction in the amount of money which is invested in funding Trade Union Representatives and Training.

- 2.5 The Council could also, as part of this budget option, avoid paying additional costs of £2.373 million (based on 500 staff leaving) by removing the current, generous severance package available to staff leaving the organisation and instead implementing the statutory redundancy package based on actual pay.

Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	38.4%	2012
I would accept this option	21.8%	1144
I have no opinion on this option	8.0%	420
I find this completely unacceptable	31.8%	1670

- 2.6 Comments and further feedback in this area primarily came from Council employees, who expressed concern at the proposal to change the severance scheme from its current level.
- 2.7 However, Members will also be aware that Wirral currently pays one of the most generous severance schemes in the North West, with the majority of Councils paying the statutory rate. Wirral also pays redundancy on actual pay rather than the £450 per week national limit. Some Councils pay redundancy at enhanced rates but do not pay 3 months notice. The current cost of the severance scheme may mean we are able to allow less employees to leave than who volunteer, and it can also make it extremely difficult to 'bump' redundancies.

3.0 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMS

Proposed Savings

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
200	70	270

Option Summary

- 3.1 The Council spends around £1.1 million every year on telecommunications, including mobile phones, phone calls, network phones, CCTV, urban traffic control links and schools. This option involves combining all of these aspects into a single contract to deliver significant savings over two years.

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Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	53.4%	2847
I would accept this option	35.1%	1873
I have no opinion on this option	5.9%	312
I find this completely unacceptable	5.6%	301

4.0 MANAGING THE MONEY

Proposed Savings

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
400	30	430

Option Summary

- 4.1 This option comprises a number of proposals, including improving the way the Council allocates 'capital' funding and achieving savings through insurance fund contracts. A further element of this option is to begin recovering payment transaction charges from customers using online or credit card methods to pay for services.

Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	34.1%	1817
I would accept this option	27.6%	1467
I have no opinion on this option	14.0%	748
I find this completely unacceptable	24.3%	1292

- 4.2 Many people leaving comments and other feedback in relation to this option expressed concern at the element of the proposal related to transaction charges. The Council is able to implement transaction charges just to credit card payments, which are more expensive to process, and not charge transaction charges for payments made with a debit card.

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5.0 IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL

Proposed Savings

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
250	69	319

Option Summary

- 5.1 This option will see the Council make savings through making the Call Centre more efficient in the first instance. The option will also see significant early savings being made through improving the online channels people are able to use to contact the Council for such things as booking leisure and sports activity

Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	45.7%	2432
I would accept this option	36.4%	1939
I have no opinion on this option	9.4%	502
I find this completely unacceptable	8.4%	448

6.0 COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

Proposed Savings

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
140	0	140

Option Summary

- 6.1 The Council could seek Magistrate's Court agreement to increase Summons / Liability Order Costs by £10 for 2014-15 from the current total of £85 to £95 in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates non payers.

Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	48.2%	2212
I would accept this option	36.6%	1681

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I have no opinion on this option	5.8%	265
I find this completely unacceptable	9.4%	431

- 6.2 Comments and other feedback in this area questioned whether the proposed rise in Summons and Liability Order Costs was high enough, and suggested that full cost recovery should be achieved.

7.0 COUNCIL TAX 70 AND OVER DISCOUNT

Proposed Savings

2014/2015	2015/2016	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
1300	0	1300

Option Summary

- 7.1 Wirral Council provides a Council Tax Benefit to War Widows, people in receipt of a War Pension and people disabled due to War, as well as providing a blanket 7.76% discount on Council Tax to every household where the residents are over the age of 70 – providing they are not in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support.
- 7.2 This option proposes that, while the Tax Benefits for war widows, people receiving war pensions and people disabled due to war should remain, in line with the principle of using resources to protect the most vulnerable, the blanket pensioners' discount of 7.75% should be removed.
- 7.3 An option within this option would be to limit the discount only to those properties falling in the lower Council Tax bands (A, B & C). This would fit with the principle of the broadest shoulders bearing the greatest burden and would save £616,000.

Consultation Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I would support this under the circumstances	32.3%	1504
I would accept this option	22.0%	1024
I have no opinion on this option	5.6%	259
I find this completely unacceptable	40.2%	1874

- 7.4 The comments in this area were varied, with the majority of additional feedback received either suggesting that the discount should remain or that some form of means testing should be applied. Members

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requested that the responses to this option be expressed according to the age of the respondent. This data is provided below.

Answer Options	What was your age on your last birthday?			
	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+
I would support this under the circumstances	27%	31%	33%	35%
I would accept this option	17%	23%	24%	19%
I have no opinion on this option	15%	7%	5%	5%
I find this completely unacceptable	41%	39%	39%	41%