

CABINET

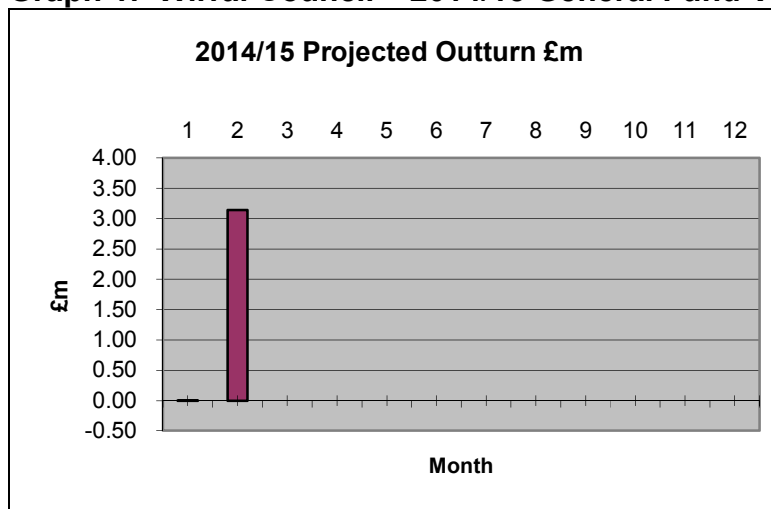
7 JULY 2014

SUBJECT	REVENUE MONITORING 2014/15 MONTH 2 (MAY 2014)
WARD/S AFFECTED	ALL
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES
KEY DECISION	YES

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the revenue position for 2014/15, which at Month 2 (May 2014) shows a projected General Fund overspend of £3.14 million (1.1% of the net revenue budget). The major source of the variance relates to the savings programme delivery within the Families and Well Being Directorate. Processes are in place for rigorous monitoring which have early in the financial year identified pressures and will allow actions to be put in place to deal robustly with this matter. Management actions are being developed to address this issue which will be reported in future monitors. In addition the report flags up a number of corporate wide savings which will require careful monitoring and identification of mitigating measures to ensure savings are delivered in the year.
- 1.2 The report also details increased in year commitments relating to Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) allowances of £152,000 relating to street lighting and the receipt of additional New Homes Bonus monies of £242,253.

Graph 1: Wirral Council – 2014/15 General Fund Variance, by month



2 CHANGES TO THE AGREED BUDGET

- 2.1 The 2014/15 Budget was agreed by Council on February 25, 2014 and is detailed in Annex 2; any increase in the Budget has to be agreed by full Council. Any changes to the budget occurring since it was set will be summarised in the table below.

Table 1: 2014/15 Original & Revised Net Budget by Directorate £000's

	Original Net Budget	Approved Budget Changes Prior Mths	Approved Budget Changes Month 1-2	Revised Net Budget
Chief Executive	10,035	-	-	10,035
FWB - Adult Social Services	74,667	-	-	74,667
FWB – Children & YP, Schools & Safeguarding	82,877	-	-	82,877
FWB - Sport & Recreation	8,502	-	-	8,502
Regeneration & Environment	95,190	-	-	95,190
Transformation & Resources	20,199	-	-	20,199
Corporate Growth & Savings	-15,813	-	-	-15,813
Net Cost of Services	275,657	0	0	275,657

- 2.2 There have been no budget movements between directorates in the first two months of the year.

3 PROJECTIONS AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The outturn position projected as at the end of period 2, key issues emerging and directorate updates are detailed below.

Projections

Table 2: 2014/15 Projected Budget variations by Directorate £000's

Directorates	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under) Overspend Month 2	RAGBY Classification	Change from prev mnth
Chief Executive	10,035	10,187	152	A	-
FWB - Adult Social Services	74,667	77,662	2,995	R	-
FWB – Children & YP, Schools & Safeguarding	82,877	82,877	0	G	-
FWB - Sport & Recreation	8,502	8,513	11	G	-
Regeneration & Environment	95,190	95,190	0	G	-
Transformation & Resources	20,199	20,178	-21	G	-
Corporate Growth & Savings	-15,813	-15,813	0	G	-
TOTAL	275,657	278,794	3,137		0

The main report only comments on large variations (Red and Yellow items). The 'variations' analysis over 28 budget areas, distinguishes between overspends and underspends. The 'risk band' classification is:

- Extreme: Overspends - **Red** (over +£301k), Underspend **Yellow** (over -£301k)
- Acceptable: Amber (+£141k to +£300k), Green (range from +£140k to -£140k); Blue (-£141k to -£300k)

Table 3: Directorate Business Area Projected Budget variations

	Chief Exec	FWB	Rege & Environ	Trans & Res	Total
Red Overspend	0	1	0	0	1
Yellow Underspend	0	0	0	0	0

The full Table is set out at [Annex 3](#)

- 3.2 One business area is currently flagged as red rated. This is Delivery within Families and Well Being - Adult Social Services and relates mainly to the delivery of 2014/15 savings for which management actions will need to be identified.

Key Issues

- 3.3 The savings tracker contained within section 4 of this report contains an assessment of the 2014/15 savings programme. This shows £11.1m of savings rated as red (defined as high risk or not achieved) with a further £8.9m of options rated at amber (concerns).
- 3.4 The ratings are a result of robust assessment of progress to date against the original proposed budget options and identification of in year slippage against targets. Red rated options include a number relating to Adult Social Services options, savings on the library budget not yet implemented, corporate commissioning and procurement savings still to be identified and the Future Council initiative where slippage to a January implementation date is forecast to deliver half the 2014/15 planned saving, however mitigation is in place and being developed as set out below.
- 3.5 A number of identified mitigating actions are in place to assist the Future Council programme savings delivery and reduce the risks to the budget. These include continuation of the spending freeze, vacancy management, the voluntary redundancy offer, reviewing growth allocations and identification and control of other underspending directorate budgets. Mitigating actions will also deliver £3m from within public health. These measures include capitalisation of eligible schemes which, reduce commitments on the revenue budget, efficiencies, rephasing and review of Public Health Outcomes Funding and use of public health funding against other eligible directorate commitments
- 3.6 The impact of the above measures combined with the projections for the overall budget position reduces the forecast yearly overspend to £3m. Projections will be updated monthly and further mitigating measures identified as the year progresses.

Directorate Updates

- 3.7 Within the various directorates there have been the following developments:

Chief Executive's: No variances have been identified within the core budget area. A potential overspend of £152,000 is however currently forecast as a result of new in year commitments within asset management.

The expected variance relates to additional street lighting Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) allowances. CRC street lighting requirements were announced by government after Council had agreed the 2014/15 budget. Additional allowances for street lighting at an estimated cost of £152,000 will require purchasing. Mitigation has not yet been identified from within the Directorate budget to cover this increased cost, but proposed mitigation for dealing with this is set out below.

In mid May government announced the New Homes Bonus allocation: returned funding grant determination with amounts for the 2014/15 financial year. This includes an additional grant element of £242,253 for Wirral which was not included in the 2014/15 budget as no decision that this return funding would be paid to local authorities had been made. The allocation is a general grant and could be used to offset the above increased Carbon Reduction Commitment in 2014/15.

Families and Well Being:

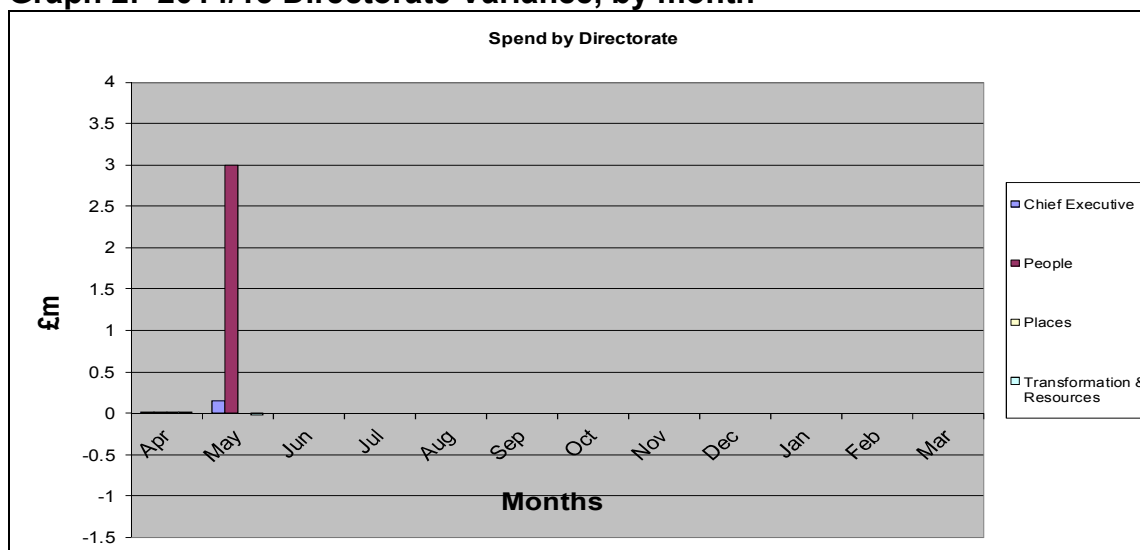
- Adults: Slippage against 2014/15 savings projects is £2.35m with further actions to be identified. The remaining variations cover a number of areas mainly within community care. Pressure within the Community Care budget is being addressed through management actions and savings projects. These areas have been highlighted by the DASS Transformation Board and are being reviewed with a view to identifying mitigating actions
- Childrens: No variances have been reported for childrens. Careful monitoring of savings progress will be required during the year.
- Schools, Safeguarding, Sport & Recreation: A minor variation of £11,000 is currently forecast for Sport and Recreation.

Regeneration and Environment: At this early stage of the financial year, there are no major budgetary issues to report within the Regeneration & Environment Directorate. The Directorate remains on course to meet its 2014-15 financial targets.

Transformation & Resources: An underspend of £21,000 is currently forecast for the directorate. The Library savings relating to changes agreed in 2013/14 for implementation in 2014/15 have not been implemented. These savings related to changes in opening hours and working arrangements and are being covered at the moment from vacant posts within the service.

Corporate Wide Budgets: A number of high value corporate wide savings options because of their size and complexity are currently classed as high risk. This includes savings from the Future Council initiative and Corporate Commissioning. These require close monitoring and will be further reported upon during the year.

Graph 2: 2014/15 Directorate Variance, by month



4 IMPLEMENTATION OF SAVINGS

4.1 The delivery of the agreed savings is key to the Council’s financial health and is tracked at both Council and Directorate level. The assumption is that, where there is slippage, the Strategic Director will implement replacement savings.

Table 4: Budget Implementation Plan 2014/15 whole Council (£000’s)

BRAG	Number of Options	Approved Budget Reduction	Amount Delivered at May	To be Delivered
B - delivered	39	9,054	9,054	0
G – on track	33	7,249	1,317	5,932
A - concerns	25	8,887	552	8,335
R - high risk/ not achieved	7	11,069	368	10,701
P – replacements for Red	0	0	0	0
Total at M2 May 14	104	36,259	11,291	24,968

Note: For 2014/15 the red rating definition has been amended from that used in 2013/14. Red is now classed as high risk or not achieved (in 2013/14 it was defined as failed)

4.2 As referred to in paragraph 3.4 above a number of savings options are currently red rated. The 2014/15 red rating definition has been broadened from that used in 2013/14 to now include high risk rather than only failed options.

4.3 The **spending freeze** for non-essential spending has been extended into the 2014/15 financial year and will continue until further notice. The purpose being to reduce any projected overspend, which by Section 28 of the Local Government Act 2003, is the duty of the Council.

4.4 The 2014/15 Budget includes a number of budget saving options profiled to produce benefits towards the end of the financial year. Details will be provided throughout the year within the report regarding any slippage in savings

achievement and actions taken to bring savings on back on schedule, or to provide temporary compensatory funding where appropriate.

5 GROWTH

- 5.1 An allowance for the impact of demographic changes, inflation and other risks - that is outcomes that could be worse than assumed - was built into the budget 2014/15 as detailed at Annex 5. The assumptions which totalled £9.2m have been and are subject to ongoing review.
- 5.2 A review of the growth requests and assumptions made in February has taken place. This has identified approximately £0.9m of in year reductions which can be achieved. These are a result in receiving updated information on requirements and assessing the timing and commencement of commitments for new initiatives. The details of the adjustments are detailed in table 5 below

Table 5: Suggested Growth Reductions

	2014/15
Adults (Increased demand)	100
Ordinary Residence	200
Contract Inflation	85
Children's (Leasowe Millennium Centre)	50
Children's (Youth and Play)	76
Graduates	88
Selective Licensing Landlords	178
Economic Strategy Unit	100
Total Reduction	877

6 INCOME AND DEBT

- 6.1 Revenue and Income falls into the four broad areas shown below for reporting purposes:

Table 6: Amount to be collected in 2014/15 £000's

	2014/15	2014/15	
	Collectable	Collected	%
	£000	£000	
Council Tax	137,225	25,996	18.9%
Business Rates	71,328	12,867	18.0%
Fees and charges – Adults	10,415	11,242.	107.9%*
Fees and charges – all other services	7,800	8,674	111.2%*

*A proportion of Fees income collected in 2014/15 will apply to debts raised pre April 2014, ie to debts in addition to those newly collectable in 2014/15 .

COUNCIL TAX

- 6.2 The Council Tax collection after two months of the year is comparable with the equivalent 2013/14 collection rate. No significant changes to Council Tax arrangements were implemented for 2014/15. This is now the second year of Local Council Tax Support scheme.

- 6.3 Recovery from non Council Tax Support recipient debtors is continuing as normal. Action taken to recover from those of Working Age that previously received Council Tax Benefit is ongoing. Repayment plans offering weekly/fortnightly instalments were offered to those contacting the Council. Where possible attempts to collect by Attachment of Earnings and Benefits will be prioritised however inevitably in some cases this will not be possible and alternative methods including Bailiffs will need to be utilised.

BUSINESS RATES

- 6.4 Following changes implemented recently by central government, businesses can now have the option to pay Business Rates over 12 monthly instalments. Previously payment options had been over 10 instalments. Income collection to the end of May was 18.0%. This was lower than the 19.53% collected at the equivalent period in 2013/14. The most significant factor in this is the take up of 12 monthly instalment option which as a result of the extended payment time, means that the collection rate will not catch up until March 2015.

DEBTORS

- 6.5 Ongoing work has continued to improve collection and resolve outstanding debts and currently leaves a balance outstanding of £22,054,513 compared to last year which at the end of May 2013 was £26,461,856. Income receipts in April and May exceeded bills raised in the period and reflect a reduction in the net debt position.

7 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 The possible failure to deliver the Revenue Budget is being mitigated by:
- Tracking system of savings to ensure delivery;
 - Future Council Project Governance arrangements including the regular review of in year and future savings by Chief Officers
 - Monthly review by Chief Officers, and Cabinet, together with an improved Scrutiny regime, and greater transparency;
 - Individual monthly review by Cabinet Portfolio holder at portfolio meeting;

8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Any option to improve the monitoring and budget accuracy will be considered.

9 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 No consultation has been carried out in relation to this report.

10 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 10.1 As yet there are no implications for voluntary, community or faith groups.

11 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL, IT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

- 11.1 Cabinet 12 February 2014 agreed a 2014/15 General Fund balance risk calculation of a minimum of £17.3 million. The level of risk is forecast to reduce in future years with the General Fund balance requirement for 2015/16 calculated at £15.4 million. This will be reviewed during the year to reflect changing circumstances and any in year developments.

Table 7: Summary of the projected General Fund balances

Details	£m	£m
Balance 31 March 2015 when setting the Budget 2014/15		+17.3
Less: Potential overspend, at M2		-3.1
Add: Additional New Homes Bonus		+0.2
Projected balance 31 March 2015		+14.4

- 11.2 Earmarked Reserves excluding school balances total £66.1 million. These include reserves relating to the cost of Council remodelling, mitigation and specific project support and ongoing financial risks. Earmarked reserves will be reviewed during the year.

12 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The entire report concerns the duty of the Council to avoid a budget shortfall. The Chief Finance Officer has a personal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 section 114A to make a report to the executive if it appears to him that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure.

13 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 This report is essentially a monitoring report which reports on financial performance. Any budgetary decisions, of which there are none in this report, would need to be assessed for any equality implications.

14 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

15 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

16 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16.1 Cabinet is asked to note that at Month 2 (May 2014), the full year forecast projects a gross General Fund overspend of £3,137,000.
- 16.2 Cabinet is asked to note the increased commitment of £152,000 for Carbon Reduction Commitment allowances contained within the above figure

- 16.3 Cabinet is asked note the payment of New Homes Bonus grant of £242,253 which is a general grant received outside of directorate budgets.
- 16.4 Cabinet is asked to note the risks relating to non delivery of savings as detailed in paragraph 3.3 and requirement for mitigation and actions to be identified
- 16.5 Cabinet notes the mitigating actions being undertaken including capitalisation, reprofiling and use of public health budgets as per paragraph 3.5 and reductions to 2014/15 growth as detailed in paragraphs 5.2 and table 5 above. Further mitigating action will be developed as appropriate during the year.
- 16.6 Cabinet approve the application of the additional New Homes Bonus grant against the Carbon reduction commitment and overall overspend to reduce the net overspend to £2,894,747.

17 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 17.1 The Council, having set a Budget at the start of the financial year, needs to ensure that the delivery of this Budget is achieved. This has to be within the allocated and available resources to ensure the ongoing financial stability of the Council. Consequently there is a requirement to regularly monitor progress so that corrective action can be taken when required which is enhanced with the monthly reporting of the financial position.

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ANNEXES

- Annex 1 Revenue Monitoring and Reporting Timetable 2014/15.
- Annex 2 General Fund Revenue Budget for 2014/15 agreed by Council.
- Annex 3 RAGBY Full Details
- Annex 4 Mitigating Actions 2014/15
- Annex 5 Growth and Risk
- Annex 6 Income and Debt

SUBJECT HISTORY

Council Meeting	Date
Since September 2012, a monthly Revenue monitoring report has been submitted monthly to Cabinet. Budget Council	25 February 2014

Annex 1 REVENUE MONITORING AND REPORTING TIMETABLE 2014/15

Period Number	Month	General Ledger Updated and Reports Available To Be Produced	Reports Available For The Executive Strategy Group	Reports Available For Cabinet
			Monthly	Monthly
1	April	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	May	Jun 6	Jun 17	Jul 7
3	June	July 7	Aug 26	Sep 11
4	July	Aug 8	Aug 26	Sep 11
5	August	Sep 5	Sep 23	Oct 9
6	September	Oct 7	Oct 21	Nov 6
7	October	Nov 11	Dec 16	Jan 15
8	November	Dec 12	Jan 20	Feb 10
9	December	Jan 8	Jan 20	Feb 10
10	January	Feb 6	Feb 24	Mar 12
11	February	Mar 6	TBC	TBC
12	Outturn (Provisional)	TBC	TBC	TBC

AGREED BY COUNCIL ON 25 FEBRUARY 2014

Directorate/Service Area	Original Budget	Variances	Revised Budget
	£000	£000	£000
Expenditure			
Chief Executives	10,035	-	10,035
Families and Well Being		-	
Children and Young People, Schools and Safeguarding	82,877	-	82,877
- Adult Social Services	74,667	-	74,667
- Sports and Recreation	8,502	-	8,502
Regeneration and Environment	95,190	-	95,190
Transformation and Resources	20,199	-	20,199
Net Cost of Services	291,470	-	291,470
Corporate Growth	1,016	-	1,016
Corporate Savings	-16,829	-	-16,829
Budget Requirement	275,657	-	275,657
Income			
Local Services Support Grant			
New Homes Bonus	1,768	-	1,768
Revenue Support Grant	87,492	-	87,492
Business Rates Baseline	32,036	-	32,036
Top Up	40,513	-	40,513
Council Tax Requirement	112,214	-	112,214
Council Tax Freeze Grant	1,334	-	1,334
Contribution from G Fund Balances	300	-	300
Total Income	275,657	-	275,657
Statement of Balances			
As at 1 April 2014	17,300	-	17,300
Contributions from Balances	(300)	-	(300)
Forecast Balances 31 March 2015	17,000	-	17,000

Note: This table will be updated for agreed variances during the year

Annex 3 - MONITORING FULL DETAILS

RAGBY REPORTING AND OTHER ISSUES

The Red and Yellow RAGBY issues that are the subject of corporate focus are detailed in the following sections by Business Area (by Directorate identifying the service in the Council Estimates (Green Book))

Department	Number of Budget Areas	Red	Amber	Green	Blue	Yellow
Chief Executive's	5	0	1	4	0	0
Adult Social Services	2	1	0	1	0	0
Children & Young People, & Schools	5	0	0	5	0	0
Safeguarding	1	0	0	1	0	0
Sports & Rec	1	0	0	1	0	0
Regeneration & Environment	5	0	0	5	0	0
Transformation & Resources	7	0	1	5	1	0
Corporate Growth & Savings	2	0	0	2	0	0
Total	28	1	2	24	1	0

Business Area Reds

	Chief Exec	People	Places	Trans & Res	Total
Red Overspend	0	1	0	0	1
Value £000s		3,727			3,727

Business Area Yellows

	Chief Exec	People	Places	Trans & Res	Total
Yellow underspend	0	0	0	0	0
Value £000s					

Annex 4 - MITIGATING ACTIONS 2014/15

HEALTH OUTCOMES FUND – CAPITALISATION		£
Regeneration	Wirral Allotments Project	168,000
Regeneration	Start Active - Play Active - Stay Active	230,000
Regeneration	Wirral Way widening and safety improvements	130,317
Sport and Rec	Guinea Gap Centre - 2x 3G Football pitches	245,000
Sport and Rec	Fitness Suite facility at West Kirby Concourse	111,999
Total transferred to Capital Programme and borrowing		885,316
Less borrowing costs as previously revenue funded		-88,530
TOTAL FROM OUTCOMES FUND ONE-OFF SAVING		796,786

HEALTH OUTCOMES FUND – EFFICIENCIES AND STOPPING		£
Childrens	Connect for Wellbeing	34,374
Childrens	Children in Care (CiC) Council Project	26,067
Childrens	Substance Misuse	61,400
Childrens	Teenage Pregnancy	50,000
Regeneration	Healthy Homes	102,234
Regeneration	Forest Schools	35,991
Regeneration	Young Drivers	15,000
Regeneration	Proxy Purchasing Project	12,500
Regeneration	Pilot Scheme to encourage behaviour Change	16,735
Regeneration	FoCAL (Forest Community and Adult Learning)	75,438
Sport and Rec	Enhance and up skill Fitness Suite Staff	11,889
Sport and Rec	Youth Sports Nights	14,785
Sport and Rec	Positive Futures Programme Assistant	33,000
Sport and Rec	Training budget for 'Activators' courses	41,250
Sport and Rec	'Run in Wirral' and other outreach activities	22,500
Various	Other Schemes (below £10,000)	32,403
TOTAL FROM OUTCOMES FUND – EFFICIENCIES & STOPPING		585,566

PUBLIC HEALTH – REVENUE	£
Allocation against existing eligible activity releasing resources	1,600,000

GROWTH REDUCTION / REPHASING OF APPROVED GROWTH 2014/15

Directorate	Description	Growth £	Action	£
Adults	Inc demand Older People	1,139,000	Reduction agreed	100,000
Adults	Ordinary Residence	500,000	Reduction agreed	200,000
Adults	Contract inflation	835,000	Per increases agreed	85,000
Childrens	Leasowe Millennium Centre	76,000	Absorb in asset mgt	76,000
Childrens	Youth and Play Services	50,000	Absorb in Service	50,000
T&R	Graduate	88,000	Defer recruitment	88,000
Regeneration	Selective Licensing	356,000	Half-year to implement	178,000
Regeneration	Economic Strat. Unit	200,000	Half-year to implement	100,000
TOTAL FROM REDUCING / REPHRASING GROWTH 2014/15				877,000

Annex 5 GROWTH AND RISK

DIRECTORATE	OPTION TITLE	2014/15
		£000
FAMILIES		4,626
Demographic Growth	Childrens - Special Guardianship and Adoption numbers	240
	Adults - Demand (Young Adults with Learning Disabilities)	926
	Adults - Increased demand Older People	1,139
	Adults - Ordinary Residence	500
Other Growth	Childrens - Staying Put Policy	0
	Assets - Leasowe Millennium Centre	76
	Childrens - Youth and Play Services - refocus provision	50
	Adults - Care Bill implications	0
Inflation	Childrens - Increasing Fostering & Adoption Allowances	200
	Childrens - PFI Affordability Gap	190
	Childrens - Teacher Retirement Costs	80
	Childrens - Transport Contracts	80
	Childrens - Energy and CRC Allowances price increases	310
	Adults - Contract inflation	835
REGENERATION		1,784
Demographic Growth	Temporary Accommodation Budget	50
Other Growth	Housing /Homeless Prevention (presently from Community Fund)	0
	Car Parking Operations Income	350
	Increase to green waste processing gate fee	65
	Economic Strategy Unit	200
	United Utilities Standing Water Charges	0
	New System for administering Resident Parking Schemes	40
	Parking Income shortfall due to end of income agreement	68
	Biffa Property Uplift	13

DIRECTORATE	OPTION TITLE	2014/15
		£000
	Selective Licensing of Landlords	356
	Homelessness Prevention Grant	221
	Prevention and support services (presently from Community Fund)	0
	Housing Standards and Renewal (presently from Community Fund)	0
Inflation	Highway Services Contract	48
	Contract for Parking Enforcement Services	10
	Urban Traffic Control Systems	20
	Biffa Contract Inflation	343
TRANSFORMATION		2,773
Other Growth	Graduate Trainee Programme	88
	Savings Profiling including Business Rates	900
	Council Tax Summonses	1,300
	Council Tax Support Scheme: Uprating in line with Housing Benefit	265
	IT Support	120
	Benefit Advice Services	100
	Elapsing of unpaid leave 3 year savings option	0

By Directorate	2014/15	By Type Of Growth	2014/15
	£000		£000
Families & Wellbeing	4,626	Demographic	2,855
Regeneration	1,784	Other Growth	4,212
Transformation	2,773	Inflation	2,116
Total	9,183	Total Growth	9,183

Since the budget was set a review of growth and assumptions has been undertaken. The following reductions which reflect changes in profile and phasing will assist mitigate pressures in the 2014/15 budget.

Annex 6

INCOME AND DEBT

The following shows the collection progress for Council Tax, Business Rates, Accounts Receivable and Benefits

Council Tax

The following statement compares the amount collected for **Council Tax** in the period 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2014 with the amount collected in the same period in 2012/13:

	Actual 2014/15 £000s	Actual 2013/14 £000s
Cash to Collect	137,225	135,419
Cash Collected	25,966	25,802
% Collected	18.9%	19.1%

Council Tax benefits have been abolished and replaced by Council Tax support and the numbers and awards as at 31 May 2014 are as follows:

Number of Council Tax Support recipients	37,633
Number of pensioners	15,956
Number of vulnerable (working age)	7,701
Number of working age	13,926

Council Tax Discretionary Policy as at 31 May;

21 awards granted totalling £3,676,
6 cases adjourned,
179 refused reason, requesting payment of 22% after maximum Council Tax Support.
5 cases reason, moved to 100% CTS from 78%,
4 cases reason, others/misc.
17 cases outstanding.

Business Rates

The following statement compares the amount collected for **National Non-Domestic Rates** in the period 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2014 with the amount collected in the same period in 2013/14:

	Actual 2014/15	Actual 2013/14
	£	£
Cash to Collect	71,328	70,396
Cash Collected	12,867	13,749
% Collected	18.0%*	19.53%

* 12 instalments introduced, adopted by at least 25% of accounts showing comparison.

Accounts Receivable

The table below shows the directorates and amount of debt at each recovery stage:

Directorate Description	Less than 10 days	1st reminder	2nd reminder	3rd reminder	Total at 31.05.14
Chief Executive	£54,930	£18,538	£8,514	£631,474	£713,456
Neighbourhood	£790	£2,310	£0	£30,413	£33,513
Transformation & Resources	£1,690,276	£2,889,231	£24,146	£927,266	£5,530,919
Families & Wellbeing	£4,330,898	£382,123	£368,360	£9,406,885	£14,488,266
Regeneration & Environment	£424,960	£283,036	£86,981	£818,376	£1,613,353
Policy & Performance	£158	£0	£0	£0	£158
Totals	£6,502,012	£3,575,238	£488,001	£11,814,414	£22,379,665

The above figures are for invoices in respect of the period up to the end of May 2014. Payments as well as amendments such as write-offs and debt cancellations continue to be made after this date on all these accounts. There is a further deduction of £325,152.00 to be made for unallocated payments leaving a balance of **£22,054,513**

BENEFITS

The following statement details the number of claimants in respect of benefit and the expenditure for Private Tenants and those in receipt of Council Tax Support up to 31 May 2014:

	2014/15	2013/14
Number of Private Tenant recipients	31,876	31,391
Total rent allowance expenditure	£22,966,814	

Number under the Local Housing Allowance Scheme (<i>included in the above</i>)	12,304 £9,829,429	11,965
Number of Council Tax Support recipients	37,611 38,617	
Total Council Tax Support expenditure	£27,830,288	
Total expenditure on benefit to date	£50,797,102	

The following statement provides information concerning the breakdown according to client type as at 31 May 2014 and gives the early year numbers to show the shift in sector by benefit claimants during the year.

Claimants in the Private Rented Sector	14,080	14,531
Claimants in the Social Rented Sector	17,228	16,906
Owner Occupiers	10,060	10,118
Total claimants by age group		
- under 25 years old	2,486	2,504
- 25 – 60 years old	21,535	21,548
- over 60 years old	17,347	17,361

There are 41,368 benefit recipients in Wirral as at 31 May 2014.

Under Occupancy regulations

From 1 April 2013 property size criteria was introduced to working age tenants of social landlords (Registered Providers). Where a claimant is deemed to be occupying accommodation larger than they reasonably require Housing Benefit is restricted:-

- By 14% in 2,776 cases
- By 25% in 677 cases

The number of claims affected does fluctuate. The numbers above are a snapshot at 31st May 2014.

Housing Benefit Fraud and Enquiries – 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2014

New Cases referred to Fraud team in period	1,385
Cases where fraud found and action taken	115
Cases investigated, no fraud found and recovery of overpayment may be sought	507
Cases where fraud found and action taken:	
Administration penalty / caution	10
Successful prosecution	47
Included in total prosecutions	

Discretionary Housing Payments

The table below profiles the position of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) administration and associated spend. DHP is not a payment of Housing Benefit and is funded separately from the main scheme. Since the introduction of Welfare Reform and associated impacts, additional funding has been made available.

The Government contribution for 2014/15 is £995,795 with an overall limit of £2,489,487 which the Authority must not exceed.

Month	Claims Considered			DHP Awards in Payment	Current Awards	% spent (committed) of total fund	Annual Total Cont. remaining
	Total considered	Awarded	Refused				
April	259	203	56	248	£93,371	10%	£902,424
May	464	361	103	816	£181,503	35%	£814,292
Totals	723	564	159				

Local Welfare Assistance

The Local Welfare Assistance Support Scheme (LWA), supported by a £1,345,925 Government Grant, gives assistance to those in immediate crisis or need through the provision of pre payment cards for food and fuel and direct provision of white goods. The number of applications continue to rise on a week by week basis.

LWA details for period from 07 April 2014 to 31 May 2014:

Number of awards granted for food	456	value	£21,311
Number of awards granted for fuel	613	value	£10,120
Number of awards granted for goods	1,497	value	£161,896
Total number of awards made	2,566	value	£193,327

This direct grant will be ended on 31 March 2015 and during 2014/15 the Authority will need to decide what, if any, provisions are made for 2015/16 in this area.