

WIRRAL COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

22 July 2014

SUBJECT:	FUTURE COUNCIL
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee with an update as to the progress of the Future Council project, as well as an opportunity to engage with and influence the emerging options which are being developed in order to transform the Council and achieve the savings required of us.
- 1.2 The emerging options will be further developed and then published by the Chief Executive, as officer budget options, for full public, staff and service user consultation in September 2014.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Council's Corporate Plan is clear in that the Council budget – in terms of investment decisions and budget savings – should be set according to three key priorities;
- Tackle health inequalities, poverty and disadvantage - narrow the gap between our richest and poorest communities
 - Protect the vulnerable, making sure people are safe and feel safe – and can remain independent as long as possible
 - Driving economic growth – investing in Wirral's future
- 2.2 The Council is also committed to ensure that savings are identified and delivered based on the following principles where possible:
- Spend less on the cost of running the Council
 - Broadest shoulders to bear the greatest burden
 - Mitigate the impact of savings on frontline services

- 2.3 The Council, as is the case with many other authorities, is dealing with a budget position which remains extremely stark. We have consistently forecasted the savings required and made substantial savings already. However, the funding gap for the next two years is at least £45 million (as reported to Council in Feb 2014) with further savings required as we add in the likely grant figures for subsequent years (2017/18 and beyond). The outturn position in 2013/14 has been positive and will enable a further contribution to be made to fund the restructuring costs. It is important that we focus on the outcomes we want to see for Wirral by investing the ongoing net budget which is still forecast to be £250 million per year. It is, of course, vitally important that we focus on ensuring we use those resources in the right way.
- 2.4 The Future Council project has completed a full review process across every Council service. The information collected is now being analysed and work is ongoing to produce options for service transformation and immediate savings.
- 2.5 The emerging options are presented within this report and associated Appendix for consideration by Members. Options will continue to be worked on, with business cases and impact assessments produced, before they are published for full consultation by the Chief Executive in September 2014.
- 2.6 Following a report to Cabinet in April 2014, the Leader of the Council has requested that, in accordance with the Council's policy framework, Members are fully engaged and able to participate with the development of budget options through pre-decision scrutiny. This report provides the first opportunity for that activity, with Members invited to debate and inform the principles upon which budget options and investment priorities are being developed.
- 2.7 During autumn of this year, Members will have the opportunity to conduct more detailed scrutiny of the options which are published by the Chief Executive, before making recommendations to Cabinet.

3.0 PURPOSE OF SESSION

- 3.1 The purpose of this session is to enable Members to debate the future direction of service provision and the principles upon which budget options and investment proposals are being developed. Members are also provided with a summary of the emerging options within each theme for consideration. The options relevant to the Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee are included as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Further work will be completed on developing these options, before they are published by the Chief Executive for public, staff and stakeholder consultation in September 2014.

4.0 APPROACH

- 4.1 Services have been considered and are presented to Members according to themes, which were developed based on shared outcomes which services work to. These themes are;

- Enabling Services
- Community and Neighbourhood Services
- Specialist and Targeted Services

4.2 Emerging options within each of these themes have been provided to Coordinating Committee within three position papers. In addition to this, universal options which cover all services and themes are in development, and the emerging details of these are also provided.

4.3 To enable wider scrutiny and participation in developing options, these papers will also be presented to external boards and stakeholders for consideration, including health and wellbeing board, investment board and the public service board.

5.0 CROSS-CUTTING OPTIONS

5.1 The Future Council process has identified and begun to scope a number of cross cutting projects which will drive savings for the authority. More work is being completed on these projects in advance of the publication of all budget options in autumn. However, a summary is provided below to enable Members to give their early consideration and views:

- Charging, income and collection; making sure the Council has effective and efficient processes for collecting income.
- Commissioning, procuring and contracting; reviewing all contracts and service level agreements which are in place to ensure the best value for money is being achieved.
- Reshaping customer contact; making sure access to Council services is appropriate, and is offered through the most cost effective channels, and ensuring a full review of all information, advice and guidance provision is completed to target resources effectively.
- Efficient approach to transactions; making sure administration is streamlined, and combining similar functions and processes wherever possible to improve efficiency and save money.
- Flexible and mobile working; ensuring the Council workforce can work as flexibly and efficiently in the field as they can in the office to increase productivity.
- Asset Management; getting the best value out of the Council's assets throughout the borough.
- Out of Hours provision; combining our various out of hours services into one multi-functional division

6.0 NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Feedback from Members on the principles and emerging options will form part of the budget development process. Officers will continue to develop options and the Chief Executive will publish his proposals in September.
- 6.2 In September, Members will have further opportunities to debate and comment on the detailed options.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 A full programme risk register has been developed and is regularly updated and reviewed in line with the programme governance arrangements for the Future Council approach.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Council has made a commitment that all decisions related to the budget setting process should be underpinned by comprehensive, genuine and robust consultation with all stakeholders. Therefore, no further options have been considered.

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The Future Council process will include a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement and consultation in the development of a series of budget and service delivery options. These will be the subject of a wide ranging Member, staff, stakeholder and public consultation process which will commence in September 2014.
- 9.2 Ongoing, fortnightly briefings are being held with Trade Union colleagues specific to this project, and briefings are ongoing with political parties and Council staff.

10.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

- 10.1 All actions related to this project are either complete or in process.

11.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 11.1 Effective partnership working with organisations within the voluntary, community and faith sector will be vital to ensure the Council can meet its financial challenges while still ensuring the right outcomes are being achieved for Wirral residents. Comprehensive engagement and discussions with organisations from the sector is ongoing and will continue throughout this process.

12.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 12.1 None arising as a result of this report.

13.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None arising as a result of this report.

14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

14.1 Yes. An Equality Impact Assessment was developed and reported to Cabinet on 13 March 2014.

15.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None arising directly as a result of this report.

16.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 None arising directly as a result of this report.

17.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

17.1 The Committee is requested to:

- Note and provide feedback on the principles described within the Position Paper upon which budget options and investment proposals are being developed.
- Consider how they would prefer to approach the more detailed scrutiny sessions in September.

16.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

16.1 Council has made a commitment that all decisions related to the budget setting process should be underpinned by comprehensive, genuine and robust consultation with all stakeholders and the Future Council process is vital to ensuring this commitment is delivered.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Community and Neighbourhood Services