

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## Birkenhead Constituency Committee

30 October 2014

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>FUTURE COUNCIL: CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUDGET PROPOSALS</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>WARDS WITHIN BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY AREA: Bidston and St James Birkenhead and Tranmere Claughton Oxton Prenton Rock Ferry</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>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides Members on the Birkenhead Constituency Committee with the opportunity to provide feedback on the Chief Executive's Budget Proposals which are currently out for public consultation.
- 1.2 Members are provided with the publically available information as well as, where practicable, additional information as to the impact of the options on the Constituency area.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Future Council project has completed a full review process across every Council service. The information gathered has been used to redesign the Council through merging similar services, streamlining senior management and getting better value for contracts and goods purchased. This work has resulted in proposals being developed which would reduce the budget gap for

2015/2016 from £18 million to £2.5 million as well as achieve the already agreed savings of £9.4 million through remodelling the Council.

- 2.3 One 08 September 2014 the Chief Executive published options for public consultation to bridge the remaining budget deficit of £2.5 million. These options totalled around £4 million, leaving genuine choice for Members in setting the budget. Detailed scrutiny work through focussed task and finish groups is ongoing across all Policy and Performance Committees. These groups will report their views into Cabinet before the budget is proposed.
- 2.4 This paper provides Constituency Committees with a reminder of the options which are out for public consultation as well as more detailed information as to the direct impact on the Birkenhead constituency area if the option was accepted.

### 3.0 DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY

- 3.1 This theme focuses on fundamentally changing the way the Council delivers services. The scale of the budget reductions we are facing means that, inevitably, we will commission more services than we provide in the future – either through private companies, the voluntary sector or through another type of arrangement, such as a shared service with another Council or public sector agency. This does not mean we will ‘outsource’ services for the sake of it.
- 3.2 We will analyse, model and research the best, most appropriate and cost effective way of delivering every Council service in the future – using a fair, systematic and consistent approach. To make this work, we will use our influence to make sure that all public services in the borough work together, acting as ‘one team’ to make sure we get the maximum value for public money. We will make sure money isn’t being spent on similar things by different organisations when we can get better value through doing things together. We will also support partners and develop the skills and capacity within the community, voluntary, faith and private sectors so that the services we need to commission externally can be delivered to the standard that we need.

<b>OPTION: WEST KIRBY MARINE LAKE</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
25	-	25

This option would see us transferring the day to day operations of the site to another organisation – keeping the facility open but removing some of the financial burden to the Council.

<b>OPTION: ALL AGE DISABILITY SERVICE</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
600	-	600

This option would involve a holistic review and redesign of the way we deliver services to disabled children and their families, including overnight short breaks at Willow Tree and the interface between children's and adults services. It would mean a redesign of how support is delivered, with greater integration with other service areas, in particular early help and adult social care. Detailed consultation with children and families accessing services will take place before any changes.

<b>OPTION: YOUTH AND PLAY</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
450	-	450

The Council has committed to making a major capital investment in a state of the art new Youth Zone, to be built in Birkenhead. This option would see the Council reduce the funding associated with the existing youth service while that facility is developed. Initially, this option would involve closing four satellite youth centres, and reviewing the location of the four remaining youth 'hubs', currently located in Birkenhead, West Kirby, Wallasey and Eastham. The option would also see the Council stop the funding associated with the current 'Play Scheme'.

#### Impact on Birkenhead

In Birkenhead, this would specifically involve removing the funding associated with running Charing Cross Youth Club in Claughton (as well as Bebington, Fender and Moreton Youth Clubs). The option would also see the funding associated with Play Schemes at Beechwood, Gautby Road and Leasowe, the Wirral Play Council, the Civic Award Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh Award being removed.

## **4.0 MANAGING DEMAND**

- 4.1 We will reduce the demand and subsequently the cost of specialist, substantial services through empowering people and communities to help themselves. We will place a major emphasis in the future on working with people, and communities, to both improve their aspirations and achievements and also limit the resources needed for costly, specialist services. We will also focus on improving people's living situations, aspirations and general family life across a whole range of areas - reducing the demand on Council services, enabling the money saved to be better invested elsewhere.
- 4.2 This will involve a complete redesign of the way outcomes are achieved for children, young people and vulnerable adults in Wirral. The focus will be on increasing independence, and reducing demand on Council resources, as well as joining up our work with partners, such as the NHS – which will provide major savings but also a more integrated service for people receiving support.

<b>OPTION: PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL

£000s	£000s	£000s
570	-	570

The vast majority of the funding the Council uses to maintain highways comes in the form of grants from national government. Wirral is one of only a few Councils in the country to put extra, local money into this fund to carry out 'preventative' work, across both our highways and our parks. This option would see us removing this additional investment, and focussing our maintenance work where there is a safety implication.

<b>OPTION: SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
90	65	155

Last year, the Council worked alongside all schools in the borough in an effort to share the costs of providing school crossing patrols. Unfortunately, only a few schools agreed to pay towards their costs. Therefore, this option would mean we review the school crossing patrols which are currently at 47 sites across the borough where there is already a pedestrian, pelican or puffin crossing in place. Initial estimates are that out of the 47 sites, a total of 41 school crossing patrols would be removed. We believe that, due to the crossing facilities which are in place 24 hours a day, the demand and requirement for a school crossing patrol is greatly reduced. Before this option is implemented, a full risk assessment will be completed on every crossing site.

#### Impact on Birkenhead

School Crossing Patrols are currently available at the following sites within the Constituency. Each site would be subject to a full risk assessment and, if it is judged that existing road safety measures are sufficient, the crossing patrol would potentially be removed.

- Bidston Village Road / Fender Way
- Borough Road / Brattan Road
- Borough Road / Prenton Road East
- Borough Road / Shaw Street
- Borough Road / Whitford Road
- Cavendish Street / Old Bidston Road
- Church Road / Elm Road
- Conway Street / Cathcart Street
- Hoylake Road / Bidston Village Road
- Hoylake Road / Challis Street
- Laird Street o/s Portland Pri
- Shrewsbury Road / Kingsmead Road
- Singleton Av / Woodchurch Road
- Watson St / St Annes Way
- Whetstone Lane / Derby Road
- Whetstone Lane (no 51) / Park Grove
- Woodchurch Road (no 126)

- Woodchurch Road / Brattan Road
- Woodchurch Rd (239) / Singleton Av
- Holm Lane (No102) Overton Way
- Ingestre Road (o/s16)
- Townfield Lane (o/s school)
- Bebington Road / Hesketh Avenue
- Bedford Road / Highfield Road
- Highfield Lane / Rock Lane West
- Bedford Drive / The Wiend
- Old Chester Road / Oriel Road
- Well Lane / Albany Road

## 5.0 INCOME AND EFFICIENCY

- 5.1 We will not subsidise chargeable services unless it helps us to meet another objective. Every pound spent on bureaucracy and subsidies is a pound diverted from frontline services. The work in this theme will make sure the Council is efficient when it comes to charging and collecting income for services; it will focus on improving and streamlining the way in which we operate and collect funding and bring a commercial approach to the Council's business where it is appropriate.
- 5.2 Many of our services are also chargeable – both in terms of residents paying for them but also other organisations such as schools, housing associations and other partner agencies. We will focus on making sure those charges are appropriate and, importantly, cover what the service costs us to deliver.

<b>OPTION: COUNCIL TAX OVER 70S DISCOUNT</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
600	-	600

Wirral Council is the only Council in the UK which offers households a discount on their Council Tax based purely on their age and the Council Tax band of their home. The discount is not means tested, people receive it regardless of their personal financial circumstances, and our residents with the lowest income already receive Council Tax Support and therefore either pay no, or only a proportion of, Council Tax. We therefore propose this option, which would remove that discount for all current recipients to achieve a saving of £600,000.

### Impact on Birkenhead

This particular discount is available to Over 70s Households in Council Tax Bands A, B, C and D. Of the 11,391 households currently in receipt of the discount, 19% (2142) are within Birkenhead wards – ward breakdown is demonstrated in the table below.

<b>BIRKENHEAD</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Bidston & St James	159	1	6	11	<b>177</b>
Birkenhead & Tranmere	177	17	1	1	<b>196</b>

Claughton	134	110	133	41	<b>418</b>
Oxton	130	261	134	40	<b>565</b>
Prenton	84	202	128	62	<b>476</b>
Rock Ferry	171	67	59	13	<b>310</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>2142</b>

<b>OPTION: COMMEMORATIONS, REGISTRATIONS AND MEMORIALS</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
100	100	200

It is proposed to merge the current births, deaths and marriages registrar team with the crematorium and burials registrar team, co-locating the merged team within one office. It is also proposed to raise burials and cremation fees to closer match those of neighbouring authorities, while not affecting our ability to offer a competitively priced service.

<b>OPTION: CHARGING FOR ALLOTMENTS, BOWLING GREENS AND FOOTBALL PITCHES</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
35	-	35

This option proposes that the charges associated with using Council allotments, bowling greens and football pitches are raised over the next two years, to ensure the income collected more closely covers the costs associated with providing maintenance. We will also pursue transferring the management and ownership of Bowling Green sites to the bowling clubs themselves.

#### Impact on Birkenhead

In the constituency area, this option would impact on 17 allotment sites, 2 bowling greens and 5 playing fields. The affected sites are listed below:

<b>Allotment Sites</b>
Bebington Road
Bedford Avenue
Boundary Road
Carrodus
Church Road
Fairview Road
Harris
Hill Road
Lansdowne Place
Molyneux
Mountwood
Ormonde

St James
Sumner Road
Thornton
Tollemache Road
Upton Road

<b>Bowling Greens</b>
Birkenhead Park
Victoria Park

<b>Playing Fields</b>
Birkenhead Park
Borough Road Playing Fields
Conway Playing Fields
Valley Road Playing Fields
Victoria Park

<b>OPTION: CAR PARKING – COUNTRYSIDE PARKS</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
50	15	65

This option would introduce pay and display parking charges into the Parks and Countryside car parks at Arrowse Country Park, Eastham Country Park, Wirral Country Park and Royden Country Park. The option will generate income, but requires some investment in providing cash payment ticket machines. The income generated will assist in continuing the maintenance of the park.

<b>OPTION: CAR PARKING – FORT PERCH ROCK</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
25	10	35

This option would introduce pay and display parking charges into the Fort Perch Rock car park at New Brighton, where there are presently no charges. The option will generate income from a well utilised car park and requires some investment in providing cash payment ticket machines. There are currently traffic problems developing around the successful New Brighton redevelopment, which it is thought would be eased through this approach – before implementing this option the Council would work closely with all businesses involved

<b>OPTION: LITTER AND DOG FOULING ENFORCEMENT</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
70	-	70

Littering and dog fouling offences can impact adversely on the local environmental quality of Wirral. The Council has saved £1 million per year by targeting our street cleansing resources more efficiently. Many community groups have also risen to the challenge and play a significant role in keeping our borough clean and tidy. However, unfortunately, there are a minority of people that persist in discarding their rubbish irresponsibly. The Council proposes to launch a joint dog fouling and litter patrol team to target such offenders. A more generic team will maximise the limited resources available to tackle these problems.

<b>OPTION: COLD CALLING ZONES</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
80	60	140

This option proposes that we implement a small charge of £10 per household where a community wishes to implement a 'No Cold Calling Zone' in their street or area. Residents within No Cold Calling Zones will benefit from rapid response to reported instances of 'cold caller' activity, a designated coordinator, link to 'Ringmaster' messaging and alerts, advice and other services.

<b>OPTION: PEST CONTROL</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
65	-	65

This option proposes, alongside some staffing changes, a 10% increase in charges for all domestic and commercial services provided by Environmental Health, and the introduction of a charge for the element of the Pest Control service related to rats and cockroaches.

<b>OPTION: PUBLIC CONVENIENCES</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
140	-	140

The Council manages ten public convenience facilities which are located mainly in retail and coastal areas across the borough. The provision of public conveniences is not a statutory function and there is no legal obligation on Wirral Council to provide this service. This budget option would be to seek out community organisations that may wish to take on the full delivery, maintenance and operational costs of running the facilities in their area. If no suitable organisations could be identified then it is recommended that the facilities be permanently closed.

<b>OPTION: ROADSIDE GRIT BINS</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
55	-	55



The Council installed 100 roadside grit bins, which were strategically located throughout the borough – to help residents living on hills, and other areas where ice and snow caused more dangerous problems. Following the success of this programme, the Council agreed to install extra bins at residents’ request, 198 in total. This option proposes that, while the winter maintenance and gritting routes would remain unaffected, the Council would no longer fill 198 roadside grit bins from the highway. Communities are welcome to continue filling the bins with salt themselves should they wish to. We will continue to provide precautionary salt spreading to the 10 priority routes, the clearance of ice and snow from these routes and major shopping areas and 100 grit bins which have been installed in accordance with the criteria for the statutory provision of grit bins.

**Members are provided with a full list of all Grit Bin locations as an appendix to this report, together with an indication of whether the grit bin would be retained or removed.**

<b>OPTION: GIRTRELL COURT</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
385	-	385

Girtrell Court is a ‘short break’, respite service for adults with disabilities. The service has 20 beds, of which 15 are ‘respite’ and 5 are designated as permanent. At the moment, 130 people are registered to access respite through Girtrell Court, and all use it for a certain number of weeks per year. This option would explore the possibility of using this facility more widely. This could potentially see Girtrell Court being invested in, and its capabilities expanded to enable the NHS to use the centre on a joint basis for patients who either do not need hospital care or who are being prepared for discharge following treatment. A full review of all the options available will be undertaken and will require full consultation with those people directly impacted by any proposed changes.

## **6.0 CUSTOMER CONTACT**

- 6.1 ‘Customer Contact’ means, basically, all of the different ways residents contact the Council or access services – either over the phone, online, through letters or emails or face to face at one of our hundreds of buildings. This work will conduct a thorough review of all those access channels, and make sure they are as cost effective and targeted as possible.
- 6.2 We will focus on moving as many services as possible entirely online – removing back office administrative costs, and making processes much easier for customers to complete. The Council also spends millions every year on various forms of information, advice and guidance – both directly providing it and also through contracts. We will again review all of this spend to make sure that we are getting the best value for money possible.

<b>OPTION: COMMUNITY LIBRARIES</b>		
2015/2016	2016/2017	TOTAL

£000s	£000s	£000s
411	-	411

We are one of the only Councils to not close any libraries. We believe this is the right decision as libraries play a hugely important role in any community. However, maintaining 24 libraries in their current form in a borough as small as Wirral is clearly not possible in the current financial climate. This option would see our community libraries, which are smaller and less well used, 15 in total, reduce their opening hours to an alternating 2 or 3 days per week, 10am-2pm. This option would NOT affect central libraries or libraries with One Stop Shop facilities included.

These hours would be implemented on an alternate basis – so that on any given day, at least one library in a constituency area would be open. This option brings the benefit of major savings, while at the same time keeping all 24 of Wirral’s libraries in operation. It also gives us the opportunity to actively seek community involvement to potentially increase the libraries opening times and use in the future – rather than closing the facilities permanently.

Analysis confirms customer demand across these sites currently peaks during 10am – 12pm and 2pm – 4 pm with a significant reduction in demand outside of these periods. It is anticipated that the removal of the lunchtime closure at these sites will encourage more uniform and focused usage across a proposed 4 hour day.

#### Impact on Birkenhead

Libraries at Birkenhead Central and Rock Ferry would be unaffected by this proposal. Opening hours would be reduced at the following community libraries:

- Beechwood
- Prenton
- Ridgeway
- St James

## **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 has included a comprehensive programme of stakeholder engagement and consultation in the development of a series of budget and service delivery options. These have further been 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**

13.1 None arising as a result of this report.

## **14.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

(a) Yes and impact review is attached –

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/chief-executives>

## **15.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 None arising as a result of this report.

## **16.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 None arising as a result of this report.

## **17.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

17.1 Committee is requested to consider the contents of the report and provide Cabinet with its views on the budget options proposed.

**17.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

17.1 Council has made a commitment to ensure all Members are effectively engaged with and provided with every opportunity to comment on and input into the budget setting process.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Published Business Cases for Budget Options**

**Appendix 2: List of current Grit Bin locations**