

Chief Executive's Budget Proposals Future Council Project

Public Consultation Feedback	
Theme	Delivering Differently
Definition	We will robustly assess the best means of delivering a service, choosing the most efficient and effective option.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The future plans and budget proposals within the change theme of 'Delivering Differently' are presented for Members within this report. Also presented is the quantitative feedback received through the consultation questionnaire and a summary of the main themes emerging through qualitative feedback, from sources such as the consultation questionnaire, meetings with groups and letters, emails and other communications sent directly into the consultation process.
- 1.2 Where targeted consultation took place with people using services affected by a budget option, feedback received is presented alongside the appropriate budget option.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 Consultees were provided a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for each individual option. This information included:
- **Questionnaire:** The questionnaire provided a summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of four choices indicating their opinion on the option.
 - **Consultation Pack:** One document containing information on the change themes and all associated budget proposals was produced and made available at Council buildings and on the website.
 - **Summary Paper:** Four summary papers (one per change theme) were produced and were available online and through Council buildings. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.
 - **Business Cases:** These papers provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.
- 2.2 The consultation questionnaire and associated consultation pack was made available in Easy Read, and distributed widely through Council and voluntary, community and faith sector networks. Further work was done to ensure accessibility including promotion through the network of LCD screens in Council facilities, which further explained the context behind the budget process and provided information on how to complete the questionnaire.
- 2.3 Within the consultation documents, residents were provided with an explanation of what each change theme meant in practice – and what future plans and projects would be delivered in the coming years. They were then provided the opportunity to comment on those proposals and give an indication on whether they were appropriate and if they would suggest any changes.

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- 2.4 Residents were then provided with the specific, immediate budget proposals put forward by the Chief Executive. Residents were provided with an explanation of the impact of the option and the associated saving and requested to indicate if they supported the implementation of the option.

3.0 WE CONSULTED ON THE FOLLOWING FUTURE PLANS

- 3.1 In relation to 'Delivering Differently', residents were provided the following explanation of the change theme on which they were requested to provide feedback and comments.

"We will robustly assess the best means of delivering a service – choosing the most efficient and effective option. 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.

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.

Throughout the organisation, we will continue to review every service area to assess and evaluate the best way of delivering that service in the future. We are in the process of implementing the biggest change, and reduction, in our back office services we have ever completed, which will bring a big impact on our workforce. We will go further in the future, and find a new, more cost effective and equally as efficient way of delivering all of our back office services, making sure as much public money as possible is invested directly into the front line.

All of our professional services, such as Internal Audit, Finance, HR and Legal, will be further reviewed and a project will be established to explore new ways of delivering those services for 2016-17, delivering significant savings. A similar approach will be taken to the 'Transaction Centre' which we are in the process of establishing.

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On the ground, we will be investing in new technology to provide LED Street Lighting. Cheaper to operate, better for the environment and, crucially, brighter – this investment will see us make long term savings in this area without switching off, dimming or otherwise reducing the street lights on the borough’s highways.”

4.0 FEEDBACK RECEIVED

- 4.1 Responses were generally positive in terms of supporting the broad approach outlined in the consultation documents. Residents seemed particularly supportive of the suggested project to implement LED streetlights throughout the borough, which has since been the subject of a separate Cabinet report.
- 4.2 Responses did include many references to making sure the Council was operating efficiently, and that money invested in consultancy spend and bureaucracy, both in terms of the management and governance of the Council, should be kept to the absolute minimum.
- 4.3 Many different views were received on the potential for commissioning, rather than directly delivering, services. Some responses focussed on the positive impact this could bring to the private sector economy and potential increased efficiency, while others were concerned at a possible loss of ‘control’ in relation to the quality and accessibility of the services provided.
- 4.4 Some respondents expressed a view that salaries and total expenditure related to senior management should be reviewed to achieve savings together with various expenses and other benefits. Many respondents also highlighted the potentially negative impact on both the local economy and the Council’s ability to deliver services following substantial job losses.

5.0 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S BUDGET PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Residents were then provided with a series of budget proposals from the Chief Executive to comment on. These proposals are provided below together with the public feedback which has been received, alongside the feedback any from targeted consultation which has taken place.

Option: West Kirby Marine Lake

15/16	16/17	TOTAL
£000s	£000s	£000s
25	-	25

Wirral Sailing Centre is based at West Kirby Marine Lake and offers water sports activities and courses to anyone aged 8 and over. Many

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recreational activities are provided at the site such as water sports like windsurfing, kayaking and powerboating.

This option would see us seeking to transfer 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.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	21.2%	1209
Agree	42.5%	2428
Neither agree nor disagree	16.5%	944
Disagree	9.7%	552
Strongly disagree	10.2%	582

A petition in opposition to this option was received, containing over 4000 signatures, and is detailed in the substantive report. This petition will be presented at Council in December. The Chief Executive also received a number of letters expressing concern at the potential for a drop in service quality if this option was accepted.

Option: All Age Disability Service

15/16	16/17	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 how children's and adults services work together. 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 would take place before any changes and the Council will put measures in place to minimise the impact on families accessing the service. Willow Tree is currently accessed by around 58 children and young people. This is a valuable yet costly service and there could be opportunities to deliver the service more efficiently.

The Children with Disabilities Team works with around 230 children and young people. Around a quarter of these children are open to Social Care but do not have a Social Worker.

It is recognised that the majority of parents of disabled children do not want social work intervention; instead they want high quality, reliable consistent support to help them as a family. They also want a smooth

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transfer into adult services when appropriate. Therefore the benefit of these proposals is that families would receive help and support via at the earliest opportunity and a graduated response according to their needs wherever possible. They could also benefit from more seamless links between children's and adult services.

The service has a total budget of £5.5 million. Data comparing Wirral to other local authorities for this area indicates that Wirral's spend is £35 per child (aged 0 - 17) compared to an average of £17 in 2013-14 for other councils. A different approach to helping disabled children and their families could deliver longer-term efficiencies. An early help approach would put the emphasis on helping families in a preventative way, making social work intervention a last resort.

Public Feedback

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	11.3%	640
Agree	36.0%	2036
Neither agree nor disagree	25.8%	1459
Disagree	13.7%	775
Strongly disagree	13.2%	745

Option: Youth and Play

15/16	16/17	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.

The Youth Service currently costs the Council £2.38 million, and this option proposes a saving of £450,000; around a 19% reduction.

Initially, this option would involve closing four satellite youth centres. The Council will continue to provide four larger youth 'hubs' (currently located in Birkenhead, West Kirby, Wallasey and Eastham), however, opening hours will reduce from five to four evenings per week. This proposal would also see the Council stop the funding associated with the three current 'Play Schemes', Wirral Play Council, the Civic Award Scheme and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

There is potential for voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to provide services which would replace the proposed reduction to those provided by the Council. Funding could also be made available through

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constituency committees to support youth work, particularly outreach work where needed within their communities.

In 2013/14, approximately 8,000 individual children and young people aged 6-19 years, used the service, a majority of whom come from areas of high socio-economic deprivation. 88% of young people using the provision are from the 20% most deprived districts in Wirral.

The Youth and Play service responds to local need through experienced, specialist, professional staff and benefits from responding to and contributing to regional and national agendas. Key to its sustainability is how it ensures young people contribute to society as respected and respectable citizens within their own communities, the workplace, and education within the youth community.

To enable the strategic co-ordination of Youth and Play work activities and facilities across Wirral and to avoid duplication, the service currently works closely with a variety of partner agencies including Public Health, Merseyside Police, Wirral Brook and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

The Youth Support Service is organised geographically across the four constituencies and works with partners to meet the needs of young people avoiding any duplication. Youth Outreach Teams target hot spot areas for youths causing disruption. Withdrawing or reducing Youth and Play services would reduce the Council's ability to do this, which may impact on the contribution the Service makes to partners' targets (e.g. teenage conception rates, substance misuse, youth crime, anti-social behaviour). This could result in partners not realising national and local performance indicators.

If this option was accepted, funding would be made available for local constituency committees to commission their own youth outreach work in their local communities to mitigate the reduction of services provided directly by the Council.

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Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Strongly agree	5.8%	342
Agree	12.8%	794
Neither agree nor disagree	16.9%	1045
Disagree	29.0%	1800
Strongly disagree	35.7%	2215

A number of letters were received in opposition to this proposal, including one which referred to a committee which had been established to protect the 'Play Service' element of the option, and was sent to all local MPs. A number of petitions related to the Play Service, Wirral Play Council and Moreton Youth Centre were also received and are detailed within the

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substantive report. The Council also received a letter from the Head of Manor Primary School, expressing concerns at the potential impact of the closure of the Play Schemes affected by this option.

Within this option, respondents were also asked to indicate if they believed there were other areas within Wirral which were more appropriate to hold a 'Youth Hub' facility. Almost 2000 people made suggestions in this area, covering a wide range of areas and ideas. Many people raised concerns that the proposed Youth Zone in Birkenhead would present travel problems for those young people living in other areas of the borough.

Lots of suggestions presented the idea that Youth Hubs should be centrally located in the borough, and areas such as Rock Ferry were mentioned frequently. Areas such as Bebington, Bromborough and New Ferry were also mentioned – as was Woodchurch, which was frequently highlighted as an area which would benefit from more youth support.