

CABINET

Tuesday, 10 February 2015

Present: Councillor P Davies (Chair)

Councillors AR McLachlan P Hackett
G Davies Tony Smith
AER Jones B Mooney
C Jones S Whittingham
C Meaden

134 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in connection with any item(s) on the agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Councillor Bernie Mooney declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 11 – Proposal to Realign the Joint Carers' Commission (in line with Wirral's Strategy for Carers 2014-17) (Minute No. 144 refers) by virtue of her employment at Age UK. She indicated that she would be leaving the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

Councillor Phil Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 13 – Proposal to Realign the Joint Carers' Commission (in line with Wirral's Strategy for Carers 2014-17) (Minute No. 146 refers) by virtue of his appointment as Director for the Chamber of Commerce. He indicated that he would be vacating the Chair and leaving the meeting whilst this matter was under consideration and that Councillor Ann McLachlan would take the Chair for that Agenda Item.

135 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th January be approved.

136 REVENUE BUDGET 2015/18 AND COUNCIL TAX LEVELS 2015/16

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report of the Acting Section 151 Officer, updating the Budget Projections for 2015/16 to 2017/18. It outlined the issues and actions in relation to the Forecast Budget Funding Gap.

It indicated that Budget Council was scheduled for 24 February 2015 and the Council had to agree a Budget and set the levels of Council Tax for 2015/16 by 10 March 2015.

The Overview of the Council's Future Financial Position report to Cabinet on 9 December 2014 had provided the context by which budget decisions were being made. The projections indicated a net funding deficit over the three years of £70 million.

The report highlighted the key issues and the following documents were appended to it:

Appendix 1 - Savings 2015/16 to 2017/18

Appendix 2 - Growth Submissions 2015/18

Appendix 3 - Fees and Charges (the draft Fees and Charges Directory can be accessed through the background documents to the Cabinet agenda)

Appendix 4 - Level of General Fund Balances

Appendix 5 - Reserves

Appendix 6 - Robustness of the Estimates

Councillor Phil Davies highlighted the issues and recommendations detailed in the Director's report, which contributed to enabling the Cabinet to be in a position to recommend a Budget proposal. He introduced the Budget proposal and the following resolution was moved, which was seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan and agreed unanimously –

RESOLVED:

That the following Budget Resolution be agreed and recommended to Budget Council:

BUDGET RESOLUTION 2015/16

Cabinet notes the following:

- 1. In spite of the continuing draconian cuts by the Tory-led government amounting to £151m since 2010, this Council has protected front-line services and welcomes the fact that in 2015/16 no Library, Children's Centre or One Stop Shop will close.**

2. Cabinet welcomes the fact that, in spite of inheriting an overspend of £17m from the previous administration, Labour will deliver a balanced budget in 2015/16.

GROWTH

3. In spite of the unprecedented cuts in the Council's budget, Cabinet is able to recommend the following growth items in the period 2015/18 which will allow us to meet our corporate priorities (these are set out in Appendix 2 of the Acting Section 151 Officer's report). These include the following:-

Protecting vulnerable people

£6.8m to address demographic growth in Children's and Adults' Services.

£400,000 to address homelessness and fund the Community Safety Team.

Narrowing the inequalities gap

£600,000 to address property conditions in the private sector and promote housing and growth.

£356,000 for Selective Licensing pilot scheme in four areas of the Borough to improve private sector housing standards.

£1.5m capital for a new house building programme which continues into 2015/16.

£1.9m to continue support to schools previously funded by the Education Services Grant cut by the government.

Economic Growth

£808,000 capital to provide assistance to businesses.

£7m investment, primarily from grant, to replace the Dock Bridges.

£4m of capital to install LED lighting throughout the Borough.

£2m of capital investment into Highways (over and above Government funding).

Improving staff pay

£2.5m growth has been identified for 2015/16 to fully fund the national pay award for staff. This runs from January 2015 to March 2016.

£400,000 growth is included in the budget for 2015/16 rising to £800,000 by 2017/18 to increase the pay of social workers in recognition of the importance of safeguarding children, young people and adults.

4. Cabinet notes that there is a resource of £1.5m available for allocating in 2015/16 and that, whilst an additional £614,000 allocated as part of Wirral's Revenue Support grant is welcome, this pales into insignificance compared to the £24m which the government has cut from Wirral's Revenue Support Grant in 2015/16. This administration has a long-standing commitment to protecting front-line services and helping vulnerable people. Cabinet therefore proposes to allocate this funding as follows:-

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour - £365,200

Cabinet is determined to address the issue of anti-social behaviour which residents tell us is a key issue in many parts of the Borough. This entails being tough on the consequences of anti-social behaviour, as well as investing in facilities such as the proposed Wirral Youth Zone which will tackle the causes of this problem. We are therefore proposing the following comprehensive package of measures at a total cost of £365,200. This will be implemented by working together with our key partners, notably the police, and will be subject to a detailed evaluation to determine the impact of this additional funding.

- Employ two additional Anti-Social Behaviour officers - £75,000

Initially the matter with the highest priority is to provide an additional 2 ASB Enforcement Officers in the existing ASB team. This would result in a model of 2 ASB Enforcement Officers per constituency area and this investment would enable a far quicker and more improved response to locational issues of ASB. It would also lead to speedier case resolution, dealing with the perpetrators more quickly and providing a resolution to the victims.

- Establish an Out of Hours Environmental Health Officer rota - £30,000

Another significant ASB matter is that which relates to nuisance environmental health matters, for example – noise, light, smells, etc. This option seeks to support the setting up an Out of Hours standby Environmental Health Officer (EHO) rota. This would allow for an EHO to be on call to respond to those noise complaints outside normal working hours. This officer would also be able to issue Environmental Protection Notices direct to offenders and also install monitoring equipment, etc.

- **Establish Co-ordinator for Neighbourhood Justice Scheme - £45,000**

There is a pressing need for the Neighbourhood Justice Scheme to have a full-time Co-ordinator to oversee and drive forward this initiative. At present, the ASB Manager and a Police Sergeant are managing it, but they are unable to dedicate enough time, without major impact on other critical service delivery. This scheme has the real potential to reduce demand, change behaviour and culture across the Borough. A bid is being prepared to the Police and Crime Commissioner when her fund for Restorative Justice is released shortly, but there is no guarantee that Wirral would be successful. This item would fund the secondment of a police officer (preferably a Sergeant) into the Corporate and Community Safety Team.

- **Supporting the victims of ASB - £20,000**

In dealing with ASB, all the effort appears to be concentrated on investigating, identifying and dealing with the perpetrator. There is often little support with regard to the victims. In an attempt to redress this balance, an amount of £20,000 would be provided to engage the services of a Victim Support Mediation Service. This service would work directly with supporting the victims of ASB, which would also result in increasing the perception with those victims that we are tackling ASB.

- **Funding additional StaySafe Operations - £35,200**

One of the most effective ASB reduction programmes with regard to public perception and confidence is the StaySafe Operations. These are concentrated multi-agency operations, where teams of police, ASB officers, youth support workers, etc. saturate a particular area in a High Visibility manner engaging with youths and residents in that area. Youths who are engaged in high risk activities – drinking, drugs, etc. or those that are seen to be carrying out ASB, are taken back to a ‘place of safety’ where professionals are able to deal with these issues and where the carers and/or parents of these youths are called in to discuss their behaviour. The cost of a typical StaySafe operation is £2,200. This option would fund an additional 4 StaySafe Operations in each Constituency Area over the next 12 months.

- **Capital Investment - Funding additional CCTV cameras and other equipment - £100,000**

Following a number of years of reducing ASB spending, there is now a critical need to equip the team correctly to ensure they can tackle ASB cases more effectively. This includes replacing the 2 ASB team vehicles, replacing the Police and Criminal Evidence recording equipment, providing additional mobile CCTV cameras and most importantly investing in a modern electronic case management system. The investment in this re-equipping of resources will enable the team to operate far more effectively, and more importantly, allow them to resolve more ASB cases by being able to capture more evidence.

- **Monitoring of Council Owned CCTV Cameras - £100,000**

Working in partnership with the police, Cabinet agrees to increase the monitoring of the Council's CCTV system by appointing additional staff to be based in the Control Room at Cheshire Lines. The details to be reported back to Cabinet.

- **Provide dedicated funding to Constituency Committees to tackle ASB - £60,000**

In support of the constituency committee process and to engage the committees in tackling ASB in their areas, it is proposed to make available a fund of £60,000 to be split equally amongst the 4 Constituency Committees. The ASB team would work with the Constituency Committees and produce action plans to tackle ASB in their area. Constituency Committees will be offered a menu of ASB prevention and intervention activities to enable them to choose what they feel would benefit their areas. Some examples on this menu are – Youth alcohol testing programmes, additional youth provision, sports development workers, enhanced household security campaigns, and increased CCTV camera provision.

Local Welfare Assistance Fund - £900,000

This fund provides financial assistance to people in dire need. The government transferred responsibility for administering this from DWP to the Council together with a grant of £1.1m. The government announced that this grant was being cut with effect from March 2015. The Council has £600,000 in a reserve for this fund. Cabinet intends to make this available together with the anticipated underspend in 2014/15 of £300,000 to create a fund totalling £900,000 available in 2015/16. This will provide a local scheme to fill the gap left by the government's unwillingness to assist the most vulnerable in our communities. It is proposed that the 2014/15 policy be continued until the end of July 2015.

In the interim, Cabinet asks the Scrutiny Review Group which has been set up to look at this fund to meet in order to make recommendations as to how this resource should be allocated.

Discretionary Housing Payments - £300,000

The government recently announced that Wirral's Grant for Discretionary Housing Payments would be cut from £996,000 to £736,000 in 2015/16. Cabinet deplores this cut as yet another attack on the poor. In order to ensure that people continue to receive help with their housing needs, Cabinet agrees to invest £300,000 of Council funding to bridge the gap created by this misguided decision.

Appoint Additional Dog Wardens - £102,500

In order to tackle the prevalence of dog fouling across the Borough, Cabinet is proposing to increase the resources in this area by £102,500. It is generally accepted that a mixed service delivery model of both enforcement and education produces the best results with regards to reducing the prevalence of dog fouling. The Council is pursuing the adoption of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) across the 4 constituency areas which will be in place by summer at the latest. These PSPOs will permit a more rigorous enforcement programme. In preparation to ensure that the Council is ready to use these new Orders as soon as they are live, it will be necessary to reinforce the existing dog fouling team by a further 4 enforcement officers at a cost of £72,500. This will result in each constituency having 2 dedicated Dog Fouling Wardens.

This proposal is an enhancement of existing plans to second a senior community patrol officer to the Waste and Environmental Services team, in order to deliver the "We're Watching You" dog fouling campaign, undertake educational visits and gather intelligence from the public to assist in targeted enforcement activities. This item is also cost neutral as the budget will be substituted from the Sinking Fund.

To optimise the effectiveness of this saving option there will be a requirement to have a small marketing and advertisement budget of £15,000 per annum for 2 years. A review will be undertaken at the end of this period.

Williamson Art Gallery - £250,000

The Williamson Art Gallery is a vital element of Wirral's cultural offer. The Council has been working with a group of supporters, including the Friends of the Williamson, and the National Museums Liverpool, to put the Williamson on a stable financial footing. In the short term this will

require an additional £250,000. Looking to the future, it is our intention to work with the Friends Group and others to look at operating the Williamson under a new model such as a Trust.

Floral Pavilion - £200,000

Cabinet wishes to reduce the subsidy to the Floral Pavilion with a view to it becoming commercially self-sufficient within the next twelve months. To enable this transition to take place will require additional funding. Cabinet will therefore commit growth of £200,000 to this facility with a view to exploring a new service delivery model going forward.

Constituency Committees - £200,000

Labour introduced Constituency Committees in 2013 as part of a new Neighbourhood Working agenda. We have been impressed with the work each committee has done to enable local people to have a greater influence over how the Council spends its funding at a local level. When we started this programme we allocated £50,000 for 'seed corn' funding, focussed on tackling poverty and deprivation, which we hoped would be matched by other public agencies. Cabinet will continue to devolve funding to each Constituency Committee, however, we would request the Acting Chief Executive to undertake an evaluation of the work of Constituency Committees, and to report back to the Cabinet on what additional activities may be devolved and how far each Committee has tackled deprivation in the Borough and whether there is a case for weighting the funding going forward based on levels of deprivation. This funding is in addition to the £60,000 allocated to Constituency Committees to tackle ASB and £40,000 to carry out community clean-ups (see Section 6).

Using Business Rates flexibilities to incentivise employers to pay the Living Wage - £50,000

The Council has the discretion to award discounts in national non-domestic rates to businesses under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. To award discounts under this provision a business must meet criteria set by the Council. The cost would be charged in accordance with the business rate allocation from the Collection Fund, i.e. the Council would pay 49%, Fire 1% and Central Government 50%. If the Council contributed £50,000 then the scheme total fund would be £100,000.

It is therefore proposed that £50,000 be set aside to create a total fund of £100,000 and to offer small and medium sized businesses (10-250 employees) the opportunity of obtaining a discount on their business

rates if they become an accredited Living Wage employer. The details of how such a scheme will operate will be reported to Cabinet.

5. Cabinet has also identified additional funding for the following:-

Reduced car parking charges - £313,000

Following careful consideration of the recommendations set out in the Car Parking Scrutiny Review Report presented to Cabinet in November 2014, Cabinet proposes the following measures, for an initial 12 month trial period, to help local businesses and support the viability of Wirral's shopping and commercial centres:

- i. Simplified charges at all Council car parks for a 12 month trial period April 2015 to March 2016 which includes the removal of the 5p tariff denomination*

Proposed tariff:	Car parks:
Tariff A – shopper car parks: Up to half hour – £0.50 Up to 1 hour - £1.00 Up to 2 hours - £1.60 Up to 3 hours - £2.10 Up to 4 hours - £3.30 Up to 5 hours - £4.10 All day - £4.50	Barton Street Cook Street Europa Square Wilbraham Street Oliver Street 1 Exmouth Street Atherton Street Europa Pools Hamilton Building
Tariff B – long stay car parks: Up to 1 hour - £1.00 All day - £4.50	Hinson Street Duncan Street Woodside Approach
Tariff C – long stay car parks: Up to half hour – £0.50 Up to 1 hour - £1.00 All day - £2.00	Elgin Way Quarry Bank Street Upper Mount Avenue
Tariff D – long stay car parks: Coaches - £5.00 Up to 1 hour - £1.00 Up to 2 hours - £1.60 Up to 3 hours - £2.10 All day - £3.00	Price Street

- ii. *A new significantly reduced Pilot Tariff for the following shopper car parks for a 12 month trial period April 2015 to March 2016*

Proposed tariff:	Car parks:
Pilot Tariff – shopper car parks:	Seaview Road
Up to half hour – Not Applicable	Liscard Village
Up to 1 hour - £0.70	Liscard Crescent
Up to 2 hours - £0.80	Rocky Lane
Up to 3 hours - £1.20	Pye Road
Up to 4 hours - £2.10	Puddydale
Up to 5 hours - £3.30	Mount Avenue
All day - £4.50	Dee Lane
	Concourse

Cabinet also requests officers to progress the testing of new technology such as “Phone to Pay” as highlighted in the Car Parking Scrutiny Review report and carry out further consultation with traders’ associations to look at the feasibility of a “Parking Cashback” scheme that allows shoppers to park and have the cost of their parking ticket refunded by participating outlets. It is anticipated that these revised charges will lead to a reduction in income of £313,000 which will be found from balances. As part of this new policy it is hoped that businesses will work with the Council to ensure the success of the pilot. A review of the impact of these revised charges will be undertaken towards the end of the year and reported to Cabinet.

Continuation of Council Apprenticeship Programme – £218,000

Cabinet proposes the continuation of the Council’s apprenticeship programme which will fund 12 apprenticeship places at a cost of £218,000. This will be funded from the Children and Young People’s Department.

CREATING A CLEANER AND GREENER WIRRAL

6. Cabinet is mindful of the fact that the Waste Development or ‘sinking fund’ is ‘one off money’ and that it is therefore important to allocate as much of the fund as possible on initiatives that can be sustained (or have a sustainable outcome) once the fund runs out. Cabinet therefore proposes the following initiatives which will create a cleaner and greener Wirral. They will also directly improve recycling performance, and hence are fully eligible to be funded from the sinking fund under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the Waste Disposal Authority. In addition, all initiatives are designed to engender sustainable

improvements that can be realised after initial periods of investment.

A. Removal of charges for replacement grey wheeled bin recycling bins (140 litre, 240 litre and 360 litre)

Currently, residents are charged £37 to replace a lost, stolen or damaged wheeled bin. Over time, many residents have simply not replaced grey bins in order to avoid this cost. Those residents without grey bins are unlikely to be recycling regularly. If residents do not have enough capacity in their green residual bin for all their waste, it can also cause waste to escape into the local environment as bins are overfilled, or waste is left uncontained.

It is proposed that all grey bins are provided free of charge over the next two years. Residents should be required to sign for their bin and undertake to store it securely and use it correctly (via the serving of a notice). Bins will also be delivered pre-numbered.

Large households should also be allowed to upsize their grey recycling bin free of charge if they feel they could recycle more. Second hand bins will be recirculated wherever possible to reduce costs to the Council.

It is estimated that up to 4,000 households who should have a grey bin do not currently have one. We are also likely to receive around 1,000 calls in 2015/16 from other residents requesting replacements.

Funding required: £180,000 over a 2 year period.

B. Reduction of charge for replacement residual (green) bins

Residents are more likely to buy a green bin if their needs replacing, or they do not have one. It is therefore recommended that the charging policy remains in place for green bins. However, it is proposed that the cost of a green bin be reduced from £37 to £24 so that it is more in line with other districts and more affordable to more households.

Funding required: £80,000 over a two year period

C. Bin Repair Service

The bin repair service trialled over the last 18 months has resulted in over 1,200 bins being repaired successfully (bin lid/axles/wheels), saving the tax payers of Wirral £44,400. It is proposed that this service is formally launched and offered free of charge to residents for the next two years.

Funding required: £45,000 for two years (1 x FTE, vehicle and spare parts over 2 years)

D. Increasing capture rates for recycling on the co-mingled scheme

Research carried out by the Waste Team has proven that many households do not have an internal system within their households to segregate their waste and this leads to less recycling being captured. It is proposed that re-usable bags for all households are issued alongside a comprehensive campaign to re-engage people in recycling of all 5 materials. The design of the bag has already been determined through extensive piloting and with consultation with members of the public.

The campaign messages will vary depending upon the levels and quality of recycling we are receiving from various demographics. It is proposed to roll out the scheme borough wide to all households over a two year period, targeting areas that are recycling the least first.

This important campaign will help prepare residents for the next step change in our recycling schemes that will need to be implemented in April 2017 when Biffa are scheduled to replace the waste collection fleet. Households that actively and optimally engage in recycling will be most likely to accept and cope with any potential future changes (such as the introduction of food waste and further changes to the frequency or bin size for residual waste collections).

Funding required: £300,000 over two years (£150,000 per year).

E. Appoint four new Neighbourhood Recycling Officers

From 2015/16, resources will be set aside to completely fund 4 new full time Neighbourhood Recycling Officer roles. The roles will oversee all changes to recycling schemes and be instrumental in delivering behaviour change initiatives to ensure Wirral optimises its diversion of waste from landfill and reduces the burden of waste management costs. These posts are essential to helping Wirral achieve the 2020 recycling target of 50%.

Funding Required: £170,000 for two years (initially)

F. Community Clean-ups - £40,000

There have been a number of examples during this year where individuals and communities have come together to help clean up their local areas. We applaud the commitment and pride shown by individuals and communities and would wish to support them to continue to do so.

We therefore propose allocating £10,000 to each of the four constituency committees to enable local groups to pay for the cost of skips to be provided to support these local clean-ups. Constituency Committee managers will work with staff from the Council's waste team to quickly develop processes for this option to be introduced

The total allocation of the sinking fund proposed by the above initiatives is £775,000. If the £400,000 already allocated to tackle alleyway dumping is added, together with the £72,500 for additional Dog Wardens, this makes a grand total of £1,247,500 out of the £6.7m fund. This leaves around £5m to invest in infrastructure required to realise the step changes in 2017 that will be introduced when the new fleet is commissioned. Details are still to be worked up collaboratively across the City Region but will possibly include the roll out of food waste collections.

COUNCIL TAX TO BE FROZEN IN 2015/16

7. Cabinet was pleased to be able to freeze the Council Tax last year and was able to do this because the Council Tax Freeze Grant was built into the Council's base budget. If the rules on the use of this grant continue for a further year we intend to recommend to Council that the Council Tax is frozen for a further year. Given that Council Tax are one of the largest bills residents face, Cabinet is pleased to be able to freeze Wirral's Council Tax for the second consecutive year which will help Wirral residents cope with the cost of living crisis.

NEW MODELS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

8. This Council will be required to deliver £70m of additional savings over the next three years. This will require radical thinking around new models of service delivery, building on the company which is being proposed in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester around schools traded services and the local authority company which is being proposed for Day Centres for people with learning disabilities. More integrated working will also be essential to deliver savings and maintain good quality services. Some useful work has already been done in using public health funding to help other services such as housing and environmental health deliver key outcomes. Integrated working between social care and health is a central feature of the Better Care Fund and implementing the new Care Act.

9. FUTURE YEARS

This budget focuses on 2015/16. Cabinet intends to review the Corporate Plan in July with a view to producing a new 3 year plan. This

will look at how the Council will deliver, with its partners, future investments in local services for the period 2016 to 2019. Our main aims will continue to be protecting frontline services and delivering our corporate priorities.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the Tory-led government's unprecedented cuts in this Council's budget over the past five years, this Labour administration has protected front-line services, frozen the Council Tax for two consecutive years and invested in services for vulnerable people, programmes which tackle inequalities and action to create jobs, assist businesses, and create safer and greener communities. However, another five years of austerity will make it almost impossible to maintain even basic levels of public services. That is why this administration is totally opposed to the government's intention to return to 1930s levels of public spending. That is why this country needs a change of direction nationally and the return of a Labour government at the general election in May to restore fairness in the distribution of public funding and provide the progressive policies to deliver social justice and economic success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cabinet recommends to Council a budget proposal for 2015/16 as follows:-
 - a) That the savings 2015/18, set out at Appendix 1 of the Acting Section 151 Officer's report be confirmed.
 - b) That the Budget Growth 2015/18, set out in Appendix 2 of the Acting Section 151 Officer's report be agreed and the detail built into the Budget.
 - c) That the additional growth items identified in this resolution together with the proposals to be funded by the Waste Development Fund be agreed.
 - d) That the fees and charges be noted and delegated authority be given to the Acting Section 151 Officer to update the Council Fees and Charges Directory prior to publication before 1 April 2015.
 - e) That delegated authority be given to the relevant Portfolio Holder, relevant Strategic Director and Director of Resources in respect of revising present charges particularly for leisure and cultural activities.

- f) That the level of General Fund balances recommended continues to be based on a locally determined approach to the assessment of the financial risks that the Council may face in the future and that the Council maintains balances at, or above, this level.
 - g) That the release of reserves by Directorates be agreed and transferred to the Remodelling Restructure Reserve.
 - h) That the Chief Financial Officer Statement regarding the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the Budget and the adequacy of the General Fund balances and reserves at Appendix 6 of the Acting Section 151 Officer's Report be noted.
2. Cabinet recommends to Council the Council Tax levels for 2015/16 as follows:-
- a) That, with reference to Sections 2.38 and 8.2 of the Acting Section 151 Officer's report, Wirral's Council Tax to be frozen for 2015/16.
 - b) That it be confirmed that the Wirral Council Tax will include the precepts from the Police Commissioner for Merseyside and from the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.
 - c) That, having regard to the fact that the precepts may be determined after the Council has determined its Council Tax levels for 2015/16 authority be delegated to the Acting Section 151 Officer to publish the final Wirral Tax levels for 2015/16.
3. Cabinet recommends to Council for approval the statutory calculations associated with the decision to accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant and there be no increase in the Wirral Council Tax element for 2015/16.

The Statutory Calculations and Resolution

It be noted that in accordance with Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), that Cabinet on 9 December 2014 calculated the Council Tax Base 2015/16 for the whole of the properties in its area as 89,344.9 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) ("the Act");

- a) £114,206,012 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2015/16

(item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:

- i) £722,401,275 this being the aggregate of the amounts calculated in accordance with Section 31A (2) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts that the Council estimates that will be charged to a revenue account for the year in performing its functions, that are required to be set aside for contingencies and reserves and required to be transferred from its General Fund to its Collection Fund in the year and
 - ii) £608,195,263 this being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (3) of the Act (as amended), i.e. the aggregate of the amounts of income that the Council estimates will be credited to a revenue account for the year in accordance with proper practices, the amount of reserves that are estimated to be used to provide for the items referred to in paragraph (a) above, and required to be transferred from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in the year.
- b) £1,278.26 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16. This amount being calculated as item R divided by item T (as above).

c) that in accordance with section 36(1) of the Act that the following amounts are calculated for each valuation band in the area:

Wirral – Basic Amount Of Council Tax Per Valuation Band

A	B	C	D
£852.17	£994.20	£1,136.23	£1,278.26
E	F	G	H
£1,562.32	£1,846.38	£2,130.43	£2,556.52

These amounts being the amounts given by multiplying the amount calculated as the basic amount of council tax by the number which in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act is applicable to dwellings in a particular valuation band which is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation Band D.

It be determined that the amount set in (c) above as the Council’s Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is not excessive in accordance with the principles determined by the Secretary of State under section 52ZC of the Act (as amended) and that no Referendum to approve the Basic

Amount of Council Tax is required. The principles require a Referendum to be held for any increases of 2% or above.

Wirral – Basic Amount Of Council Tax Comparison For Referendum

	2014/15	2015/16	Change
	£	£	£
Band D	1,278.26	1,278.26	Nil

To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council’s area as indicated in the tables.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside (figures are awaited)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (figures are awaited)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

That having calculated the amounts for Wirral together with the Police and Fire the Council in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Act hereby sets the following amounts as the total amount of Council Tax for the year 2015/16 for each of the categories of dwellings.

Total Council Tax for Wirral (awaiting figures for Police and Fire)

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

137 **CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FINANCING 2015/18**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Acting Section 151 Officer providing the Cabinet with a draft Capital Programme for 2015/18 for consideration and referral to Council for approval. It also included information regarding the revenue implications of this Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the new bids as detailed in Appendix 4 be approved;**
- (2) any new bids supported by grant funding do not commence until written confirmation has been received from the granting authority that such grant(s) have actually been approved;**
- (3) progress on delivering the Capital Programme be presented in accordance with the agreed Capital Monitoring arrangements; and**
- (4) the overall Capital Programme 2015/18 as detailed in Appendix 6 to the report be agreed and referred to Budget Council for approval.**

138 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (INCLUDING TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND CAPITAL STRATEGY)**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Acting Section 151 Officer, setting out the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-18. This was a strategic, financial document that set out the Council's financial approach for the planning period 2015-16 to 2017-18. It also incorporated the Treasury Management Strategy for 2015-18 in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

RESOLVED:

- (A) That in respect of the Treasury Management Strategy 2015-18**
 - (1) The Treasury Management Strategy for 2015-18 be agreed**
 - (2) The Prudential Indicators be adopted**
 - (3) The Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Policy be approved;**
 - (4) The Council Officers listed in Appendix G be authorised to approve payments from the Council's bank accounts for all treasury management activities; and**
 - (5) Referred to Budget Council for approval.**
- (B) That in respect of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015-18**

- (1) The Medium Term Financial Strategy be agreed and referred to Budget Council for approval; and**
- (2) Regular updates of the Medium Term Financial Strategy be reported to Cabinet.**

139 **FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE (MONTH 9)**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Acting Section 151 Officer, setting out the revenue position for 2014/15, which at Month 9 (December 2014) showed a projected General Fund overspend of £0.82 million (0.3% of the net revenue budget). This was a small improvement on the £0.85 million projected overspend reported at Month 8 as shown in Graph 1 of the report.

The report indicated that the Adult Social Services projected overspend had increased in the month by £52,000 to £2.77 million. The overspend was mainly due to slippage or non-delivery of in year savings and continued demand pressures. The forecast overspend within Children's Services had reduced further with a forecast overspend now of £196,000 (down from the Month 8 projection of £330,000). The overspend largely related to the non-achievement of in year transport savings as well as costs of external placements. The Families and Wellbeing Directorate had implemented a number of management actions to help compensate and/or limit any adverse variances.

Councillor P. Davies asked officers and Cabinet Members to bear down on any possible slippage in savings as it was important to balance the books.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) that at Month 9 (December 2014), the full year forecast projected a General Fund overspend of £825,000 be noted;**
- (2) the changes in budget allocations relating to the pay award, revised depreciation charges and re-modelling savings as detailed in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 in the report, which did not impact on the General Fund position; and**
- (3) the risks relating to non-delivery of savings as detailed in the report and the continued requirement for mitigation and actions to be identified be noted.**

140 **FINANCIAL MONITORING - CAPITAL (MONTH 9)**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced the report of the Acting Section 151 Officer, setting out the capital position for 2014/15 at Month 9 (December 2014).

Councillor P. Davies commented that he was pleased to see the progress made on the Capital Receipts as detailed within the report.

RESOLVED:

That the spend to date at Month 9 of £22.5 million pounds, with 75% of the financial year having elapsed be noted.

141 **REFERRAL FROM CABINET - 9/12/14**

At its meeting on 9 December, 2014, the Cabinet considered a report by the Chief Executive and Councillor Phil Davies on the Council Budget Consultation Findings. As part of its resolution, the Cabinet made a recommendation to Council which the Cabinet was asked to consider. (Minute No. 106 refers)

The Cabinet had resolved:

At its meeting on 14 April, 2014, the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee considered a report by the Head of Business Processes on the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme 2014/15 and Future Support Options. As part of its resolution, the Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet which the Cabinet was asked to consider. (Minute No. 36 refers)

The Committee had resolved:

- (1) That this Committee sets up a Task and Finish Group to examine future options for the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as a potential piece of work in the new municipal year recognising that the timing of this is critical.
- (2) That this Committee recommends to Cabinet the establishment of a reserve to include the unspent grant funding so the Authority could review spending on welfare assistance and that it would be disheartened to see this unspent funding subsumed into general reserves rather than go towards extending the lifetime of the LWA scheme.

- (3) That the Chief Executive be asked to write to the appropriate Government Minister and request that the Government rethink its position on this grant funding for 2015/16 and beyond.'

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommendations as set out above be noted.

142 **WELFARE REFORM UPDATE**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report from the Head of Business Processes, providing an update on areas of change within the Government Welfare Reform agenda, the impact on the residents of Wirral and how Council services were responding.

Councillor P Davies and Members of the Cabinet commented that this was yet another example of the Government cuts which affected the most vulnerable in society, concerns were raised about the further impact Universal Credit would have on those already struggling with financial hardship.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) **The report be noted and that further reports be given on Welfare Reform;**
- (2) **the £70,000 transfer to the Discretionary Housing Payment fund for 2014/15 to help address the rent shortfalls that continue to be identified and require support be approved; and**
- (3) **it be noted that this Cabinet condemns the Government's decision to withdraw the funding for Discretionary Housing Payment fund and asks that our representative MP's put pressure on the Government to revise their decision on the damaging cuts affecting the most vulnerable people in Wirral .**

143 **SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE-OFFS**

Councillor Phil Davies introduced the report of the Head of Financial Services, setting out details of Housing Benefit overpayments requested to be written off.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and the debts be written-off as detailed in the report.

144 **PROPOSAL TO REALIGN THE JOINT CARERS' COMMISSION (IN LINE WITH WIRRAL'S STRATEGY FOR CARERS 2014-17**

Prior to consideration of this item, Councillor Mooney having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the room and took no part in its consideration.

Councillor Chris Jones introduced the report of the Director of Adult Social Services. Stating that, under the Care Act and in line with Better Care Fund resource allocation, Health and Social Care commissioning was increasingly becoming integrated.

The report set out the outcome of a Social Care and CCG review that was undertaken to set better outcomes for Carers overall by using resources more effectively across the Health and Social Care economy.

The Better Care Fund Plan identified joint investment of £765,000, of which £65,000 was already committed, to achieve the outcomes of:

- Protecting social care services
- Joint assessment
- Acute impact
- Resources pooled for commissioning of Carers support services across the Council and the CCG
- Joint commissioning service review 2014/15 with a view to jointly re-commissioning a single service.

The key performance indicators included supporting increased number of Carers receiving an assessment or review. A specific Carers experience survey would also be undertaken.

The report set out the reasons for, and outcomes of, a tender for Carer services.

In addition, the draft Short Break (Respite) Care Practice and Procedure Guidance has been amended as a result of the comments received through the consultation period and were used to shape the final Guidance.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the awards being offered to the provider organisations for the delivery of the Carers Health and Wellbeing Service, be approved as follows:

Lot	Service	Awarded to
1A & 1B	Carers Practical Support and Carers Grants	Wired (lead) consortia
2A	Daytime activities and Day care for people with early onset dementia	Age UK Wirral
2D	Short break beds: Age UK – 6 residential EMI beds Hoylake Cottage Hospital – 6 residential beds	Age UK Wirral (lead) Consortia
2D	Short break beds: 6 residential EMI beds	Norens Ltd

- (2) that the following services had not been awarded as part of the tender and will require further action:

Lot	Service	Action required
2B	Daytime Activities and Day care for older people with dementia or mental health issues	Re-advertise or offer within existing capacity
Reason: Due to the service provider not being able to offer the service within stipulated budget, we feel that a contract with this organisation is not sustainable if contract runs for two years and therefore not viable.		
2C	Care at Home and Outreach	Re-advertise or offer to current preferred providers
Reason: The organisations confirmed their agreed rate at £13.50 with administration costs being met by the providers. Commissioners consider that the service could be provided at the Wirral rate of £12.28 per hour, any agreement to the higher rate of £13.50 could destabilise the market.		
2D	Short break beds: 6 residential beds	Re-advertise
Reason: There were no applications made for the 6 residential short break beds, this service will require re-advertising.		

- (3) the revised Short Breaks (Respite) Care Practice and Procedure Guidance with amendments that have been made, taking account of feedback provided during the consultation period be approved.**

Councillor Mooney returned to the meeting.

145 **SCHOOLS BUDGET 2015/16**

Councillor Tony Smith introduced the report of the Director of Children's Services, recommending the approval of a Schools Budget for 2015/16 of £242,576,100 for early years, maintained schools, academies, colleges and providers in Wirral and changes to the schools funding formula following consultation with schools last term. The budget and the schools funding formula proposals were presented to and agreed by the Schools Forum on 14th January 2015.

Councillor T. Smith commented that eight of the Borough's primary Schools had received a letter from the Education Minister commending them on their use of Pupil Premiums to help disadvantaged children.

Councillor Smith further commented that in relation to attainment, the Borough was rated 1st against our statistical neighbours and 2nd in the North West for GCSE results. Councillor Smith, along with the Cabinet Members commended the work of all the teaching staff, support officers, governors and officers on their achievement towards the attainment results of their pupils.

RESOLVED:

That having taken account of the views of the Schools Forum Cabinet recommends to Budget Council that:

- (1) the contributions to combined budgets be agreed;**
- (2) the proposed reductions totalling £2.3m (£1.7m in 2015-16) be agreed;**
- (3) the High Needs Contingency totalling £500,000 be agreed;**
- (4) the reserves totalling £894,900 used to set the Schools Budget be agreed;**
- (5) the submission of the Schools Funding Formula to the Education Funding Agency containing amendments to increase the unit**

value of funding for Looked After Children and to cap the unit value for Free School Meals / Deprivation is approved; and

- (6) that following the increase in High Needs place funding for Alternative Provision to £10,000 in September 2015, the Top Up element of funding be reduced by a matching amount – from £5,000 to £3,000 per annum;
- (7) the teaching staff, support officers, governors and officers be congratulated on all their hard and achievement towards the attainment results of their pupils.

Prior to consideration of the item Councillor P Davies having previously declared a prejudicial interest in this item, left the room and took no part in its consideration.

Councillor Ann McLachlan in the Chair.

146 **WIRRAL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

Councillor Pat Hackett introduced the report of the Senior Manager – Business and Investment, updating on the progress of Wirral Council business support initiatives and the merger of Wirral Business Partnership and Wirral Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber). The report sought approval for the formation of a strategic business collaboration between Wirral Council and The Chamber for the delivery of the borough's business support services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the formation of a collaboration agreement between Wirral Council and The Chamber to deliver all business support services in the Borough be approved; and
- (2) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised to sign a legal collaboration agreement between the Council and The Chamber upon the content of this report.

Councillor Ann McLachlan vacated the Chair.

Councillor Phil Davies in the Chair.

147 **CARBON BUDGET**

Councillor Bernadette Mooney introduced a report of the Director of Universal and Infrastructure Services, advising Members of the corporate and

departmental progress made against the Carbon Budget 2014/15 as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and the revisions that were required to meet Corporate Goals for 2015/16.

Council requested that a carbon budget be established (Council 14th December 2009, Minute 77 refers). The resolution included instructions to prepare carbon budgets for each department to be presented at Budget Cabinet and Council alongside the Council's financial budget.

The Corporate Plan 2013 – 2016 stated that the Council should spend less on ourselves and obtain best value for every penny its spent. In the portion relating to Asset Management, the Transformational Projects report (Cabinet 23 May 2013, Minute 249 refers) identifies: the lowering of building running costs; carbon output; and associated penalties as measures that will deliver budget savings through reduced running costs. The Carbon Budget process promoted these aims.

The Carbon Budget was not a statutory requirement but was Wirral's only method of managing CO₂ emissions in order to reduce the carbon footprint and the costs associated with it.

Carbon Budget performance figures were used to provide evidence for the 2014 Grant Thornton Value for Money report. Together with progress on the 'Cool Wirral' initiatives they contributed to a green rating for Management of Natural Resources and a positive overall assessment.

The Carbon Budget was not financial but meeting the annual targets will have an impact on costs. Reductions in carbon emissions were achieved by reducing energy use and there are financial savings that would be made from the avoided costs of energy and Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) allowances.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) progress towards the 2014/15 target included in Appendix A to the report be noted;**
- (2) the Carbon Budget for 2015/16 be agreed and referred to Budget Council for approval;**
- (3) the current Carbon Budget method be applied until the impacts of the corporate restructuring are assessed and reflected in the new Asset Management System and that Officers be instructed to report further to Members to recommend alterations as a result of these processes;**

- (4) **Managers are directed to ensure that Carbon Reduction Implications of projects and initiatives are assessed and reported as required by the standard report template. Impacts must be reported to the Building Services and Sustainability Section to support the carbon management process.**

148 **HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE FUNDING AND STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2015/16**

Councillor Stuart Whittingham introduced a report of the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment. It stated that the Department for Transport (DfT) had written to the Council setting out the maintenance allocation within the Local Highways Maintenance Capital Block Funding 2015/16 to 2020/21. This included funding for the Highways Maintenance Block for Wirral totalling £3.305 million, and Cabinet was requested to accept the allocation for 2015/16.

The report presented both the breakdown of that highway maintenance allocation between the Bridges, Lighting and Roads/Footway elements of the network and the proposed Highway Structural Maintenance Programme 2015/16, for approval.

The maintenance of highways was a statutory duty for the Council under the Highways Act 1980 (as amended).

RESOLVED: That

- (1) **acceptance of the £3,305,000 Local Highways Maintenance Capital Block Funding 2015/16 be approved;**
- (2) **the proposed allocation of Local Transport Plan Capital Programme 2015/16 Maintenance Block between Street Lighting, Bridges and Roads/Footways be approved;**
- (3) **The Highway Structural Maintenance Programme for 2015/16 as detailed in paragraph 2.6 of the report be approved; and**
- (4) **that the Head of Environment and Regulation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and Party Spokespersons, be authorised to make the necessary adjustments to the priorities within the programme should the need arise due to financial, condition or other factors.**

149 **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE FEES CHARGED FOR ADAPTATIONS DELIVERED FUNDED BY DISABLED FACILITY GRANT**

Councillor George Davies introduced a report from the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment, which sought the endorsement of Cabinet to increase the fees applied for the delivery of home adaptations funded through Disabled Facility Grant (DFG).

RESOLVED:

the fees associated with the provision of home adaptations as funded through Disabled Facility Grants, be increased to 11.5% from 1st April 2015 be agreed and be recommended to Budget Council for approval.