

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

23 FEBRUARY 2015

SUBJECT:	REVIEW OF THE FUTURE COUNCIL BUDGET OPTIONS SCRUTINY PROCESS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	CHAIR OF COORDINATING COMMITTEE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	CLLR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report documents the pre-decision scrutiny process undertaken to review the Chief Executive's budget options arising from the Future Council process during September/October 2014. Members are requested to consider the approach taken and consider any learning points for scrutinising future budget proposals.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 The Council is faced with unprecedented challenges as a result of significant reductions in Central Government grant funding combined with increased demand for our services. In response to these challenges, the Council commissioned Ernst Young (EY) in October 2013 to conduct a review into the structure, design and function of the Council. The review provided a blueprint for remodelling staffing structures to enable the organisation to become more modern and flexible.

2.2 Early in 2014, the Council developed the Future Council programme as the vehicle for driving forward this work. The programme was designed to deliver the remodelling process to streamline back office function as well as developing new proposals to achieve the forecast budget shortfall as set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2.3 At its meeting 10 April 2014, Cabinet resolved:

"That this report and the engagement process for the Future Council Programme be referred as a priority for inclusion in the Work Programmes of each of the Policy and Performance Committees commencing in July 2014".

2.4 At the first round of Policy and Performance Committees in July 2014, a series of 'Position Papers' were presented which set out the principles for change and a series of outline themes for identifying savings. This provided Members with the opportunity to comment on the framework and rationale for the emerging proposals.

2.5 Prior to the detailed proposals being published, the Chair of the Coordinating Committee convened a meeting of all committee Chairs and Spokespersons to

develop a consistent approach to scrutinising the budget options. At this meeting (3 September), consideration was given to a piece of work undertaken in Autumn 2013 by the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee to review the previous years' budget options. This had been well received and led to a number of recommendations including a scrutiny review into the Council's Car Parking Strategy, completed during 2014.

2.6 The Chairs and Spokesperson acknowledged the success of this approach which followed the standard task and finish format over a series of meetings with a final report being taken back to the full committee. It was agreed that this format should be adopted for the Future Council budget options.

2.7 A briefing note was developed to this effect and circulated to the September Policy and Performance Committees setting out the following:

- A task and finish approach is adopted with the three Policy and Performance Committees setting up a scrutiny panel to review the options that fall under their remit.
- Each committee to determine the number of Members on its panel and the number of sessions required.
- The panel should have an initial scoping meeting once the budget options are published to agree which options they wish to scrutinise and who they want to speak to i.e. Council Officers / external advisors.
- The panel should determine the preferred days/times for the Q and A sessions i.e. full evidence day, or a number of workshop sessions.
- Cabinet leads should be invited to observe sessions.
- In line with all task and finish scrutiny work, notes will be taken and a report with recommendations will be taken back to full committee for discussion and approval.

2.8 Following the September Policy and Performance meetings, scoping meetings were convened and a series of detailed question and answer sessions were scheduled with the relevant Council officers during September and October. A number of these sessions were accompanied by site visits at locations that would be impacted by the proposals. At the end of these sessions, a report was prepared for each of the Policy and Performance Committees detailing the findings for each of the budget options scrutinised, with recommendations where appropriate.

2.9 The reports of the scrutiny review process were taken to the November Committee meetings to coincide with the report on the outcome of the public and stakeholder consultation process. Both sources of information were considered by the committees as part of their final deliberations. The three reports and the minutes of the November meetings were referred on to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 9th December 2014.

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=27437#mgDocuments>

3.0 RELEVANT RISKS

3.1 There are none arising from this report.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 The Future Council programme was developed on an iterative basis to respond to the Council's unique set of organisational challenges and as such, no other options have been considered.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 The budget options arising from the Future Council process were subject to a comprehensive and far reaching stakeholder and public consultation in autumn 2014.

6.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

6.1 There are none relating to this report.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

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

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising from this report.

9.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality? Yes, an EIA was created at the start of the Future Council process and this can be accessed from the link below. Individual EIA's have also been completed for each of the budget options consulted upon during autumn 2014.

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

10.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising from this report.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1 That Members of the Coordinating Committee consider the scrutiny process undertaken and highlight any issues or learning that can be factored into any future budget consultations.

13.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

13.1 For the committee to review the effectiveness of the process for scrutinising the Future Council budget options.

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APPENDICES

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

N/A

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	13 March 2014
Cabinet	10 April 2014
Cabinet	9 June 2014
Transformation and Resources Committee	15 July 2014
Transformation and Resources Committee	16 September 2014
Transformation and Resources Committee	5 November 2014
Cabinet	6 November 2014
Cabinet	9 December 2014