

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## CABINET

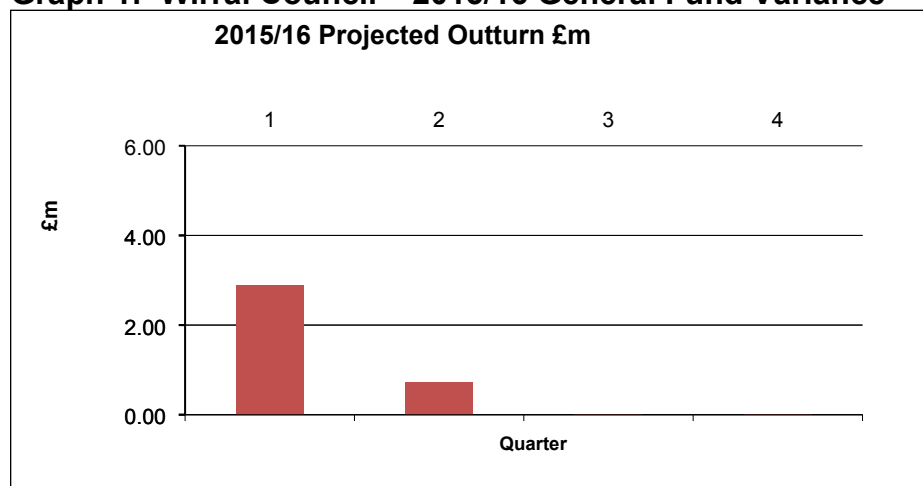
5 NOVEMBER 2015

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>REVENUE MONITORING 2015/16 QUARTER 2 (TO SEPTEMBER 2015)</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF</b>	<b>ACTING SECTION 151 OFFICER</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR PHIL DAVIES</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>YES</b>

## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the projected revenue position for 2015/16 as at the end of quarter two (September 2015). The projected outturn shows an improvement of £2.2 million compared to the quarter 1 position. Forecast is £0.7 million overspent (previous period £2.9 million). There has been some improvement in the quarter within the Adult Social Care predicted overspend and increases in both Regeneration & Environment and Transformation & Resources predicted underspends. The most significant positive variance relates to treasury management savings from forecast continued use of cash flow balances over the full year to temporarily fund accumulated capital expenditure in lieu of borrowing.
- 1.2 The headline position is shown in the graph below.

**Graph 1: Wirral Council – 2015/16 General Fund Variance**



## 2 CHANGES TO THE AGREED BUDGET

- 2.1 The 2015/16 Budget was agreed by Council on 24 February 2015 and is detailed in Annex 2; any increase in the Budget has to be agreed by full Council. Changes to the Budget since it was set are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: 2015/16 Original & Revised Net Budget by Directorate £000's**

	Original Net Budget	Approved Budget Changes Prior Qtrs	Approved Budget Changes Qtr 2	Revised Net Budget
FWB - Adult Social Care	68,305	2934	-	71,239
FWB – Children & Young People,	67,964	4541	275	72,780
FWB - Further Areas: Safeguarding, Schools, Leisure, Public Health	7,956	831	-	8,787
Regeneration & Environment	90,287	-692	-103	89,492
Transformation & Resources	31,947	-604	-193	31,150
Corporate Growth, Savings & Grant	-7,267	2,590	21	-4,656
Net Cost of Services	259,192	9,600	-	268,792

Note: £9.6 million Quarter 1 change was ratified by Council on 12 October 2015

- 2.2 The main budget movements in quarter two relate to the transfer of the Liquid Logic support team from Transformation & Resources to Children & Young People and an adjustment to the support services budget. Both of these adjustments have no bottom line net effect.

### 3 PROJECTIONS AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The projected outturn position as at the end of September 2015, key issues emerging and Directorate updates are detailed in the following section.

**Table 2: 2015/16 Projected Budget variations by Directorate £000's**

Directorates	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under) Overspend	RAGBY Class	Change from prev
			Quarter 2		
FWB - Adult Social Care	71,239	73,649	2,410	R	-21
FWB – Children & Young People	72,780	74,580	1,800	R	-200
FWB - Further Areas: Safeguarding, Schools, Leisure, Public Health	8,787	9,037	250	A	250
Regeneration & Environment	89,492	88,762	-730	Y	-430
Transformation & Resources	31,150	28,150	-3,000	Y	-1,811
Corporate Growth, Savings & Grant	-4,656	-4,656	0	G	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>268,792</b>	<b>269,522</b>	<b>730</b>		<b>-2,212</b>

The report classifies the forecast under/overspends for the above areas using a colour RAGBY rating. The ratings are defined as follows:

- Extreme: Overspends **Red** (over +£301k), Underspend **Yellow** (over -£301k).
- Acceptable: **Amber** (+£141k to +£300k), **Green** (range from +£140k to -£140k); **Blue** (-£141k to -£300k).

## 3.2 Directorate Updates

### **Families and Wellbeing: Adult Social Care**

- 3.2.1 The quarter 2 position remains virtually unchanged from quarter 1. The current forecast remains a £2.4 million overspend from demand pressures within a number of Community care areas. Further work is being undertaken to identify any mitigating actions. Targeted support also requires close monitoring of the savings position.
- 3.2.2 To assist with budget delivery, a number of projects are being supported by the Improvement and Transformation Team. Saving Plans and profiles are being reviewed to identify mitigation and an Implementation Board has been established to review Day Services and challenge financial delivery targets. Further detailed work has been undertaken to further analyse the causes and impact of the demand pressures.
- 3.2.3 With effect from 1 July 2015 Independent Living Fund users transferred to Local Authority support. The Department for Local Communities and Government has awarded Adult Social Care grant of £1.3 million to cover this expenditure for the period 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016 and reviews are ongoing to ensure this is sufficient to cover the additional costs in Adult Social Care. Any funding for subsequent years will be decided as part of the next Spending Review.

### **Families and Wellbeing: Children and Young People**

- 3.2.4 An improvement of £200,000 has been achieved in the quarter. Reducing the forecast overspend to £1.8 million Reduced spend of £0.4 million has been identified across various areas including childrens centres. There are however increased costs of £0.2 million from mainly from an increase in Special Guardianship numbers. Actions being taken to reduce the overspend:-
- A review of all residential care and independent fostering placements has been undertaken
  - There is a weekly Access to Resources panel approving all new care packages for children.
  - Assessments are being undertaken for entitlement to Primary and secondary transport with notification of any changes to parents by half term
  - A rolling programme of recruitment to Social Work positions. The Social Worker Progression Framework has been implemented. There is a detailed plan for a significant reduction in agency numbers reviewed on a monthly basis.
  - Implementation of new Children's Centres structures
  - Budget progress is reported and reviewed monthly at the Senior Leadership Team Meeting.

3.2.5 In August the Youth Justice Board issued consultation regarding a proposed 5% in year reduction of grants paid to local authorities. The impact on Wirral would be a £70,000 reduction. Objections have been lodged and the outcome will be confirmed later this month. Measures have been put in place to mitigate any in year reduction through the non-filling of vacant posts.

#### **Families and Wellbeing : Other**

3.2.6 **Leisure Services:** The forecast overspend is currently £250,000. This figure reflects slippage in budget savings. There are ongoing discussions and plans with regard to savings in 2016/17.

3.2.7 **Public Health.** As previously reported the Chancellor announced proposals to reduce in year the Public Health Budget. This may reduce Public Health Grant allocations by 6.2% (between £2 to £2.4 million for Wirral.) The outcome of this is due shortly.

#### **Regeneration and Environment**

3.2.8 There has been a further underspend of £430,000 this quarter. Car parking income is currently being projected to exceed its budgeted income target by £240,000. At the start of the financial year, car parking charges were reduced for an initial 12 month trial period. The impact this trial is being assessed but it should also be noted that car parking income is difficult to predict and that this forecast is only an emerging position.

3.2.9 There also continues to be a high number of vacancies within School Crossing Patrols which is adding to the overall underspend position. However, this is partly offset due to the recent departure of a number of employees with Highways & Transportation meaning there is currently a reduction in the number of engineers working on and charging time (thereby generating income) on capital schemes.

3.2.10 Contract efficiencies within the Supported Housing Programme explained quarter 1's positive variance. There has been some further improvement in this area during quarter 2. Pressures remain within the Floral Pavilion budget (£130k). Income projections will be monitored very carefully but are ultimately dependent on attendance at each show. There is also a forecast income surplus, of at least £50,000, above the budgeted income target within Planning.

#### **Transformation & Resources**

3.2.11 There has been an improvement of £1.8 million in the quarter resulting in a year end forecast underspend of £3 million. This is largely from savings (£2.5 million of the overall total) within Treasury Management. This is due to the continued use of internal funds to minimise the need to externally borrow and further projected slippage within the Capital Programme (which delivers one-off in year savings). Further savings have arisen from continued vacancies during the year across a number of service areas.

3.2.12 In respect of Treasury Management the external borrowing to fund capital investment has been delayed through temporary funding the 'borrowing' from cash flows deriving from reserves and other balances. This policy whilst 'losing' investment interest receivable (average 0.5%), saves an average 3.5% on borrowing costs plus delays any principal repayment. External borrowing will need to take place eventually to fund past programmes either at the point when reserves are utilised and/or to lock into lower rates before interest rates rise. Recent economic data and Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee announcements now make interest rate increases in 2015/16 less likely. Thus the timing of borrowing has been delayed to produce increased in year and one-off Treasury Management savings. Some further savings have also accrued from re-profiling the Capital Programme.

#### 4 IMPLEMENTATION OF SAVINGS

4.1 The delivery of the agreed savings is key to the Council's financial health and is tracked at both Council and Directorate level. The Budget for 2015/16 originally included £38 million of efficiency measures and it was recognised that the delivery of the savings, particularly within Adults and Children's Services was challenging being more of a transformational / change nature. Cabinet in July agreed the reprofiling of £9.6 million of savings funded from earmarked reserves (£5.4 million) and General Fund Balances (£4.2 million) which was confirmed by Council 12 October.

**Table 3: Budget Implementation Plan 2015/16 (£000's)**

BRAG	Number of Options	Approved Budget Reduction	Amount Delivered at Sep 15	To be Delivered
B - delivered	24	14,258	14,258	0
G – on track	18	3,731	2,379	1,352
A - concerns	18	11,249	4,411	6,838
R - high risk/ not achieved	2	35	0	35
<b>Total at Aug 2015-16</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>29,273</b>	<b>21,048</b>	<b>8,225</b>

4.2 The savings tracker contains an assessment of the 2015/16 savings. Cabinet 27 July agreed that £9.6 million of savings be moved into 2016/17 with funding from earmarked reserves and General Fund balances.

#### 5 GROWTH

5.1 An allowance for the impact of demographic changes, inflation and other risks has been incorporated into the 2015/16 budget. Details of these allowances are contained within the Budget Book and Forecasts 2015/18 approved by Budget Council on 24 February 2015.

5.2 In response to the projected overspend reported at Quarter 1 a review was undertaken of the growth allocated for 2015/16. As this primarily covered the impact of the social worker pay review, which had been implemented, and contractual inflation, which had been paid, there was limited opportunity for any

reductions to be identified.

## **6 INCOME AND DEBT**

- 6.1 Revenue and Income falls into four broad areas for reporting purposes. Amounts raised and collected in the year are shown below.

**Table 4: Amount to be collected in 2015/16**

	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	
	<b>Collectable</b>	<b>Collected</b>	<b>%</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	
Council Tax	140,145	76,373	54.5%
Business Rates	71,196	40,920	57.5%
Fees and charges – Adults & Children	32,740	17,714	54%
Fees and charges – all other services	32,371	20,508	63%

### **COUNCIL TAX**

- 6.2 Compared with September 2014 the collection performance is down by 0.6% but recovery action is well under way.
- 6.3 The major change this year relates to the full removal of the local Pensioner Discount for 2015/16. This affected 11,482 Band A-D, 70+ households who previously received a 5% discount. In 2014/15 the discount from Band E-H households was removed with a reduction in the discount from 7.76% to 5%.

### **BUSINESS RATES**

- 6.4 The percentage collected at September 2015 of 57.5% compares favourably with the 57.1% at September 2014.
- 6.5 The Government has undertaken a fundamental review of Business Rates including consultation with interested parties. It indicated that any changes would need to raise the same amount as Business Rates does now, some £26 billion and the preference was for a property based tax. The outcome of the review is expected to feature in the Government Budget 2016.
- 6.6 At the Conservative Party Conference it was announced that from 2020 Councils will keep all the Business Rates they collect. The detail is awaited as Wirral currently receives a 'top-up grant' from Government so receives more than is currently collected in Business Rates.

### **DEBTORS**

- 6.7 At the end of September 2015 the arrears stood at £24.7 million which compares to £22.8 million at September 2014. With the date being a moment in time the timing of the sending of bills impacts upon the reported position particularly with month-end and year-end bills. Recovery action continues to be undertaken to minimise arrears and additional temporary staff support this work.

## **7 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 The possible failure to deliver the Revenue Budget is being mitigated by:

- Senior Leadership Team / Directorate Teams reviewing the financial position.
- Tracking system of savings options to monitor progress.
- Benefits Realisation Group monitors the delivery of key change projects.
- Use of temporary additional support to assist with revenues collection.
- Use of earmarked reserves and General Fund Balance savings risk contingency

## **8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 Any option to improve the monitoring and budget accuracy will be considered.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

9.1 No consultation has been carried out in relation to this report.

## **10 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS**

10.1 There is an ongoing requirement to identify during the financial year necessary actions to mitigate any forecast overspend.

## **11 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

11.1 As yet there are no implications for voluntary, community or faith groups.

## **12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL, IT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

12.1 On 10 February 2015 Cabinet agreed to the level of General Fund balance for 2015/16 being based upon a risk calculation and a minimum of £17.4 million. The level is kept under review during the year to reflect changing circumstances and in-year developments.

12.2 As reported to Cabinet on 13 July 2015 the 2014/15 financial year saw an underspend of £0.5 million on the revenue budget whilst the release of £0.9 million of Insurance Fund Reserves added a total £1.4 million to balances at 31 March 2015.

12.3 As referred to in this report the delivery of the large savings programme contained significant risks of delay (slippage). The opening balance contained £7.2 million specifically against this risk of which £4.2 million is to be used to meet the in-year shortfall set out in Section 4.

**Table 5: Summary of the projected General Fund balances**

Details	£m
Balance 31 March 2015 when setting the Budget 2015/16	+17.4
Add; Increase following closure of 2014/15 Accounts	+1.4
Less Transfer to General Fund	-4.2
Less: Potential overspend at August 2015	-0.7
Projected balance 31 March 2016	+13.9

- 12.4 The requirement to replenish the General Fund balances to the minimum level will be addressed through Directorates identifying potential underspends in the current financial year together with a mid-year review of the Earmarked Reserves. The Reserves excluding School balances totalled £71.5 million at 1 April 2015. These include reserves relating to the cost of Council remodelling, mitigation and specific project support and ongoing financial risks.
- 12.5 Cabinet in July agreed to the use of £5.4 million of earmarked reserves to be used in reprofiling the 2015/16 savings programme. This decision was ratified by Council on 12 October, 2015
- 12.6 As referred to in Section 6.6 it was announced at the Conservative Party Conference in October that local authorities would retain 100% of Business Rates collected by 2020. Based on the present arrangements this would result in Wirral being £6 million worse-off. It was also announced that the General Government Grant (the Revenue Support Grant) would be phased out. The Grant to Wirral is £65 million in 2015/16. The details will follow in the Spending Review and Local Government Finance Settlement in late November / early December.
- 12.7 There are no IT, staffing or asset implications arising directly out of this report.

### **13 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The entire report concerns the duty of the Council to avoid a budget shortfall. The Chief Finance Officer has a personal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 section 114A to make a report to the executive if it appears to them that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources available to it to meet that expenditure.

### **14 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 This report is essentially a monitoring report which reports on financial performance.

### **15 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 15.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.



## **16 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **17 RECOMMENDATIONS**

17.1 That the improvement of £2.2 million in the 2015/16 Revenue Budget position during quarter 2 be noted

17.2 That Officers continue to identify actions and to take measures to reduce the projected overspend of £0.7 million and to mitigate against any in-year funding reductions for Public Health and to replenish General Fund balances.

## **18 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

18.1 The Council, having set a Budget at the start of the financial year, needs to ensure that the delivery of this Budget is achieved. Consequently there is a requirement to regularly monitor progress so that corrective action can be taken when required which is enhanced with the monthly reporting of the financial position.

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## **ANNEXES**

Annex 1 General Fund Revenue Budget 2015/16  
Annex 2 Income and Debt

## **SUBJECT HISTORY**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Revenue monitoring reports presented to Cabinet previous report to Cabinet 2015/16 (Quarter 1) Budget Council	27 July 2015 24 February 2015

## GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16

## ORIGINAL BUDGET AGREED BY COUNCIL ON 24 FEBRUARY 2015

Directorate/Service Area	Original Budget	Changes/ Variances	Revised Budget
	£000	£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Families and Wellbeing			
Adult Social Services	68,305	2,934	71,239
Children and Young People	67,964	4,816	72,780
Further Areas - Public Health, Schools, Sports and Recreation	7,956	831	8,787
Regeneration and Environment	90,287	-795	89,492
Transformation and Resources	31,947	-797	31,150
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>266,459</b>	<b>6,989</b>	<b>273,448</b>
Corporate Savings/Growth	-3,611	2,611	-1,000
Education Services Grant	-3,656	-	-3,656
<b>Budget Requirement</b>	<b>259,192</b>	<b>9,600</b>	<b>268,792</b>
<b>Income</b>			
Revenue Support Grant	64,281	-	64,281
Business Rates Baseline	33,266	-	32,266
Business Rates Top Up	41,287	-	41,287
Business Rates Section 31 Grants	2,193	-	2,193
Council Tax Requirement	114,210	-	114,210
Council Tax Freeze Grant	1,358	-	1,358
New Homes Bonus	2,597	-	2,597
Contribution from Reserve		5,400	5,400
Contribution from Balances		4,200	4,200
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>259,192</b>	<b>9,600</b>	<b>268,792</b>
<b>Statement of Balances</b>			
As at 1 April 2015	17,400	1,400	18,800
Contributions to/from Balances Cabinet 27 July and confirmed Council 12 October 2015)	0	-4,200	-4,200
Potential Overspend at Quarter 2		-700	-700
<b>Forecast Balances 31 March 2016</b>	<b>17,400</b>	<b>-3,500</b>	<b>13,900</b>

Note:

This table will be updated for agreed variances during the year.

Balances as at 1 April 2015 updated following completion of the Accounts for 2014/15.

**INCOME AND DEBT**

The following shows the collection progress for Council Tax, Business Rates, Accounts Receivable and Benefits.

**COUNCIL TAX**

The following statement compares the amount collected for **Council Tax** in the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015 with the amount collected in the same period in 2014/15:

	<b>Actual 2015/16 £000s</b>	Actual 2014/15 £000s
Cash to Collect	<b>140,145</b>	137,289
Cash Collected	<b>76,373</b>	75,669
% Collected	<b>54.5%</b>	55.1%

**Council Tax Support Scheme**

Council Tax benefits were abolished at the end of 2012/13 and replaced by Council Tax Support. £26.5 million is currently in payment and the numbers of awards as at 30 September 2015 are as follows:

Number of pensioners	<b>14,970</b>
Number of vulnerable (working age)	<b>9,168</b>
Number of working age	<b><u>11,226</u></b>
Number of <b>Council Tax Support</b> recipients	<b><u>35,364</u></b>

Council Tax Support claimants have dropped from 36,231 to 35,364 (784) since the beginning of the financial year. There are a number of reasons for this, including the impact of charges in respect of non-dependants in the household removing entitlement to CTS and people moving into low paid employment, claims from people of pensionable age ending.

**Council Tax Discretionary Policy as at 30 September 2015**

Period 1 April 2015 – 30 September 2015  
2 awards (£902), 42 refusals in this period.

## BUSINESS RATES

The following statement compares the amount collected for **National Non-Domestic Rates** for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015 with the amount collected for the same period in 2014/15:

	<b>Actual 2015/16 £000</b>	Actual 2014/15 £000
Cash to Collect	<b>71,196</b>	71,210
Cash Collected	<b>40,920</b>	40,691
% Collected	<b>57.5%</b>	57.1%

## ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

The table below shows the directorates and amount of debt at each recovery stage:

Directorate Description	Less than 10 days	1st reminder	2nd reminder	3rd reminder	Total at 30.09.15
Chief Executive	<b>£70,345</b>	<b>£7,485</b>	<b>£9,495</b>	<b>£941,847</b>	<b>£1,029,172</b>
Neighbourhood	<b>£21,008</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£17,677</b>	<b>£38,685</b>
Transformation & Resources	<b>£5,600,458</b>	<b>£972,208</b>	<b>£73,536</b>	<b>£1,170,959</b>	<b>£7,817,161</b>
Families & Wellbeing	<b>£3,388,044</b>	<b>£646,510</b>	<b>£177,257</b>	<b>£10,455,645</b>	<b>£14,667,456</b>
Regeneration & Environment	<b>£377,776</b>	<b>£123,945</b>	<b>£184,225</b>	<b>£567,858</b>	<b>£1,253,804</b>
Policy & Performance	<b>£0</b>	<b>£192,100</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£44,647</b>	<b>£236,747</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>£9,457,631</b>	<b>£1,942,248</b>	<b>£444,513</b>	<b>£13,198,633</b>	<b>£25,043,025</b>

The above figures are for invoices in respect of the period up to the end of September 2015. Payments as well as amendments such as write-offs and debt cancellations continue to be made after this date on all these accounts. There is a further deduction of £355,532 to be made for unallocated payments at month end leaving a balance of **£24,687,493**

## BENEFITS

The following statement details the number of claimants in respect of benefit and the expenditure for Tenants (Housing Benefit) and those in receipt of Council Tax Support up to 30 September 2015:

	<b>2015/16</b>	2014/15
Number of <b>Private Tenant</b> recipients	29,912	32,121
Total rent allowance expenditure	<b>£72,329,105</b>	
<i>Number under the Local Housing Allowance Scheme (included in the above)</i>	<i>11,388</i>	<i>12,317</i>
	<b>£28,193,558</b>	

Number of <b>Council Tax Support</b> recipients	<b>35,364</b>	37,226
Total Council Tax Support expenditure	<b>£26,501,494</b>	
Total expenditure on benefit to date	<b>£98,830,599</b>	

The following statement provides information concerning the breakdown according to client type as at 30 September 2015 and gives the early year numbers to show the shift in sector by benefit claimants during the year.

	<b>30.09.15</b>	31.3.15
Claimants in the Private Rented Sector	<b>13,375</b>	13,723
Claimants in the Social Rented Sector	<b>16,537</b>	16,271
Owner Occupiers	<b>10,279</b>	10,112
Total claimants by age group		
- under 25 years old	<b>2,025</b>	2,238
- 25 – 60 years old	<b>21,232</b>	20,921
- over 60 years old	<b>16,934</b>	16,947

There are 40,191 benefit recipients in Wirral as at 30 September 2015.

### **Under Occupancy regulations**

From 1 April 2013 property size criteria was introduced to working age tenants of social landlords (Registered Providers). Where a claimant is deemed to be occupying accommodation larger than they reasonably require Housing Benefit is restricted:-

- By 14% in 2,488 cases and By 25% in 605 cases

The number of claims affected does fluctuate. The numbers above are a snapshot at 30 September 2015.

### **Housing Benefit Fraud and Enquiries – 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015**

New Cases referred to Fraud team in period	957
Successful Prosecution/Administration penalty/caution	86

From 1 November 2015 the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud will transfer to the DWP's Single Fraud Investigation Service. Fraud Investigation Officers in scope will transfer at this time with new roles created to ensure ongoing capacity to address other areas at risk of fraud and error within service/systems, including Council Tax Support, Council Tax, Personal Finance and Discretionary areas.

### **Discretionary Housing Payments**

The table below profiles the position of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) administration and associated spend. DHP is not a payment of Housing Benefit and is funded separately from the main scheme. Since the introduction of Welfare Reform and associated impacts, additional funding has been made available.

The Government contribution for 2015/16 is £736,570 with an overall limit of £1,841,425 which the Authority must not exceed. The difference must come from the Authority's own Expenditure. It was agreed to supplement the Government contribution by a Local Authority contribution of £300,000, giving a total budget in respect of 2015/16 of £1,036,570.

The backlog of work items reported previously is significantly reduced, including applications for Discretionary Housing Payment. The strain on the available budget remains high and is consistent with that in respect of 2014/15. Small awards are being made for shorter periods, essentially to allow the service to support more people through the use of this fund. This does however mean that renewal applications are likely to be received from an increasing number of claimants which will present operational difficulties. As such our projection is that the fund will be fully utilised this year.

date	No. of Weeks	Number of awards	current awards	committed awards up to 31/03/2016	% spent (committed)of Govt cont
08/04/2015	6015		£4,687.23	£40,158.74	4%
05/05/2015	6018	864	£40,421.27	£70,031.94	7%
01/06/2015	6022	934	£47,148.86	£94,694.10	9%
02/07/2015	6027	1041	£103,253.24	£208,173.93	20%
05/08/2015	6032	1272	£158,082.51	£296,029.82	29%
01/09/2015	6035	1387	£218,434.45	£366,839.57	35%
05/10/2015	6040	1495	£294,417.37	£450,614.50	43%

### Local Welfare Assistance

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was until March 2015 directly funded by Government Grant which has now been withdrawn with the recommendation that local authorities should consider funding future schemes from their own resources.

The Council Budget 2015/16 includes the use of the £900,000 held in a reserve for this fund following the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding from 1 April 2015. The original scheme ran until 31 July 2015 and following a Task & Finish Scrutiny Review Panel Cabinet approved a continuing scheme from 1 August 2015. This sees the Council continuing to administer and maintain a Local Welfare Assistance Scheme within the budget available with a number of small amendments to the Scheme. Primarily awards made are in respect of immediate need, such as for food, utilities etc.

No. of Awards - 2015/16		Total Awarded	Cumulative expenditure
April	673	£38,896.60	£38,896.60
May	564	£26,315.11	£65,211.71
June	754	£42,240.12	£107,451.83
July	734	£43,553.30	£151,005.13
Aug	649	£34,923.09	£185,928.22
Sep	741	£40,435.51	£226,363.73