



**2016/17 Budget Proposals**

**Scrutiny Report of Families and Wellbeing  
Policy & Performance Committee**

**January 2016**

**VERSION 1**

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## **1. STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**

### **Councillor Moira McLaughlin**

Families and Wellbeing Policy and Performance Committee held a very well attended workshop to look in more detail at the officer proposals for savings in the services which fall within the remit of the Committee. This is in line with the approach adopted by the other Policy and Performance Committees and that which was employed last year.

It was undertaken against a backdrop of the requirement to make huge savings as a result of the Council having experienced grant reductions and the need to balance that with the need to do as much as possible to protect those services which support our most vulnerable residents.

The report which has been produced contains a brief outline of each proposal presented by officers. Members sought to look at any positive or negative impact of these proposals, at whether or not they felt they were achievable, and when negative results were identified look at possible ways to reduce them. What is contained in the report is not a recommendation to either proceed with a proposal nor to reject it, as they are decisions for the Executive, rather than the scrutiny committee, but it is a summary of members' considerations.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

In line with the resolution of the Coordinating Committee meeting held on 10 December 2015, a dedicated 2016/17 budget workshop for the members of the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee was held on the Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016. This provided the committee with the opportunity to examine in greater detail a number of budget proposals affecting services that fall under the remit of the committee. The budget proposals selected for further examination were identified by the Chair and spokespersons as those deemed to be of greatest significance in terms of value and the public interest. This report summarise the proposals scrutinised and the comments and suggestions of Members attending the workshop.

### **3. MANAGING DEMAND**

#### **3.1 ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES – INFLATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS (£2,800k)**

##### **Summary of Proposal**

This proposal will result in not allowing growth in the budget to allow for inflation and anticipated demographic changes. The inflation element is forecast to provide a budget reduction of £900k in 2016/17, with a further £1,900k attributable to demographics. It is, therefore, imperative for Wirral's assets to be used more effectively in order to meet the growing demands. There is now a direction of travel, both locally and nationally, towards greater pooling of resources across the health and care economy, although all of the partners face financial pressures. It is anticipated that the Better Care Fund will continue to provide a framework for such funding, while Healthy Wirral (the Vanguard programme) will deliver a strategic plan to which all partners will contribute.

##### **Committee Members' Comments**

- It was recognised that integrated commissioning will provide opportunities for parcels of funding to be combined to enable re-commissioning of specific services more efficiently.
- Members welcomed the financial contribution that Wirral receives having been successful in bidding to become a Vanguard site. The funding will assist with the health and care transformation.
- It was recognised that the proposal will aim to reduce growth in demand while also operating in a smarter way.
- Members were reassured that, due to the budget experience from previous years, it is possible to make savings despite more people receiving support. This has been achieved by reducing the unit cost of care.
- Members were reassured that, although it is anticipated that joint commissioning of services will increase, the appropriate oversight of decision-making will remain through bodies such as the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee and the Health & Care Performance Panel.

#### **3.2 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE – INFLATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS (£600k)**

##### **Summary of Proposal**

This proposal will seek to prevent growth in the budget relating to inflation and anticipated demographic changes. The inflation element is forecast to provide a budget reduction of £200k in 2016/17, with a further £400k attributable to demographics. There are a proportionately high number of children receiving support through children social care. Wirral has a higher ratio of children looked after than most Local Authorities. Wirral has 99 per 10,000 looked after children compared to a North West average of 82 per 10,000 and an England average of 60. The challenge is to safely reduce the number of children looked after in Wirral by one-third. The aim is to further strengthen, alongside the Council's partners, the ability to intervene earlier in children's lives where appropriate. It is anticipated that the demand can be better managed by intervening earlier, through initiatives such as the Troubled Families Programme (IFIP).

## **Committee Members' Comments**

- Concern was expressed regarding alternative services for victims of domestic violence now that the Zero Centre has closed. Some alternative provision does exist but not in a coordinated delivery framework. The current service provision will be reviewed in preparation for re-commissioning. It is recognised that domestic violence is a priority issue in Wirral and a new approach to how resources were invested may be required.
- There was recognition of the work being done to enable social workers to become more efficient and to improve staff retention. New pay and conditions had been implemented in January 2015. It was noted that more experienced social workers are required in the child protection team with higher priority being given to continual recruitment of social workers. That process should reduce spend as the number of agency workers should decline as a result. Additional priority is also being given to training social work managers in order to improve effectiveness.
- Members expressed concern regarding the proportion of staff who have completed performance appraisals during the previous year. It was noted that the returns for social workers was poor. However, it was also noted that a more appropriate accountability framework for social workers and managers is being developed in order to support improved performance.

### **3.3 GIRTRELL COURT (£155k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

Girtrell Court is a respite breaks facility, providing short breaks for carers of adults with complex physical and learning disabilities. This is the only directly provided care home for adults owned by the Council. The majority of this type of care, in Wirral and across the country, is now provided by the independent sector.

The site at Girtrell Court has 20 beds and is used by 120 people who have learning and/or physical disabilities. This proposal would see the Adult Social Services Department working with current users to identify alternative ways of offering respite breaks. This would include consideration of community based provision, supported breaks, shared lives and alternative building based services. The services would be provided within Wirral and at a level which is appropriate to the needs of the person and their family. The Council has a duty to ensure that a range of services are available to meet identified need, work is currently underway to ensure that this is available.

The current running costs of the Girtrell Court service are estimated to be £1.5million per annum. The average weekly unit cost is estimated at £1500 per service user which is higher than the average weekly cost of respite in the independent sector which is approximately £850 per week.

#### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Members asked about the current use of this facility and were informed that, in addition to use for respite care, there are 6 clients on interim placements. They have come to live at Girtrell Court as a result of other placements breaking down for a variety of reasons.

- Members were reassured that a range of services will be offered as an alternative to Girtrell Court. The key challenge is to match the needs of individuals with what can be provided. Alternative provision could be Shared Lives (family based care), independent sector residential respite, Direct Payments (which could be used to support the person to remain at home whilst family carers take a break), maximising use of existing community support including Mobile Nights services and Assistive Technology and use of a small number of adapted flats which have been made available and where the person could receive their support. In addition, options for holidays in resorts such as Blackpool or Llandudno could be available.
- A concern was expressed that the proposal may lead to a reduction in service. Compared to the current weekly cost of a place at Girtrell Court (£1500), the quoted cost of alternate provision (£850 per week) is perceived as potentially leading to a reduction in quality. It was clarified that the difference in costs is due to higher overhead and staff costs.
- Assurances were sought about availability and quality of the independent sector provision and also how each person would have their needs assessed. It was clarified that all users will have a review with a social worker and the needs of each person will have to be met appropriately. The review process is due to be completed by March.
- Members were reassured that families and carers will be able to visit alternative providers in order to help form judgements.
- The quality of service provision at Girtrell Court was complimented by Members. However, it was pointed out that the authority is no longer in a position to be able to run high-cost services.
- The importance of prompt and accurate information for service users and carers was emphasised. Members were informed that all service users had been written to individually. A meeting for all service users will be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January followed by individual meetings with all users.
- Members requested information regarding the timescales for change. All respite will be honoured until March 2016, but provision will be continued until all reviews are complete and all users have alternative provision in place.
- Members raised concerns regarding the staff currently employed at Girtrell Court. The Director agreed that there was a possibility of redundancy for some staff though there may be the option for some re-deployment within the Local Authority.
- Members requested further information regarding the planned usage for the Girtrell Court site. Members were informed that the Local Authority would like to explore the possibility of using the site for Extra Care housing with fully adapted flats for people with disabilities. It is felt that this would be an appropriate fit with the surrounding area.

### **3.4 SELF ASSESSMENT (£500k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

People want to be more independent and self-sufficient and it is the Council's role to enable and support that to happen wherever possible, as promoted by the Care Act 2014. The process of assessment currently requires a member of Social Care staff to undertake an assessment of a person's care and support needs. Often this requires a person to wait for an assessment to be undertaken, and in many cases this delays the ability of the person to make their own arrangements where they can and where it is appropriate for them to do so. The Department currently receives around 3000 contacts per month with around 2300 of these being requests for support. Many of these contacts are resolved quickly with information and advice, and short term interventions being provided.

In the future, people will be able to self-assess, with support, and have their assessment validated by the Department. This will increase their choice and control. From April 2016, a new interactive system, Liquid Logic, will allow direct online access to advice and information so that people can make their own decisions about their care and support. This includes a self-assessment process for people and their carers. There are still a large number of people that will require a face to face assessment to be completed by a Social Care staff member, due to complexity and risk. This service will continue to be provided by the Department.

The implications of the proposal are being discussed with staff. There is a possibility that some redundancies could occur.

### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Members asked for reassurance that the proposal will not lead to an increase in forms being completed incorrectly. Members were informed that the on-line system will enable more information to be provided in the early stages of the process. This will enable staff to invest a greater priority on the quality process.
- Members queried the number of care navigator posts which are currently unfilled and sought reassurances regarding the future for existing job holders.
- Members were informed that, due to the provisions of the Care Act 2014, the Council has a duty to provide assessments but current arrangements mean that the access to information is difficult.
- A member was concerned that safeguards would be in place for clients in the community who cannot use computers or have cognitive issues. However, Members were reassured that it will not be mandatory for clients to undertake a self-assessment. Staff support will continue to be available for those clients who require it.
- Members were informed that the development of self-assessment will result in power being taken away from professionals and placed more in the hand of service users and family members.

## **3.5 SINGLE SAFEGUARDING BOARD WITH LCR (£40k)**

### **Summary of Proposal**

The proposal is that the Adult Safeguarding Board will be provided on a Liverpool City Region footprint. The saving is based on management and administration support savings. The proposal will result in there no longer being a Wirral Adult Safeguarding Board. An independent Chair will be appointed for the City Region.

### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Members were re-assured that contributions from the relevant Clinical Commissioning Groups and the police will need to be pooled for the funding of Serious Case Reviews.

## **4. DELIVERING DIFFERENTLY**

### **4.1 BEECHWOOD LEISURE CENTRE (£73k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

Beechwood Recreation Centre was built in the early 1970's, being managed and operated by Wirral Council until 2009, when the Centre was jointly managed by Community Service Section and Beechwood Joint Management Committee. The staff were still employed by Wirral Council. Beechwood Joint Management Committee withdrew their services in 2011 and, as a result, the Centre has been managed and operated as part of the Leisure Services estate since April 2013. Wirral Council has been approached by a number of community groups interested in taking over the management and operation of the Centre, with discussions currently ongoing.

#### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Assuming an appropriate agreement can be reached between the parties, Members did not raise any objections, in principle, to the proposal.

### **4.2 LEISURE CONCESSIONS (£500k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

The Cabinet report of September 2013 first highlighted that the Council's 'free concessions' were 'very generous' in comparison with other local authorities. The value of 'free' concessions is estimated to be £500k, broken down as follows:

- Free swimming for juniors during all school holiday periods - £250k
- Passport for life (available to all ex-Wirral Council employees who have retired with more than 25 year's service for free swimming, use of the fitness suites and golf) - £100k
- Free use of all leisure facilities at all times to children in care, their siblings and carers - £100k
- Free swimming for people aged 65+ - £50k

#### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Members expressed the view that they understood this proposal was a result of the need to make such huge savings across the Council and that perhaps in other circumstances it would not be something members would like to see.
- Members also felt that the amount identified (£500k) was somewhat notional as there was no way of knowing how many of those currently using the facilities for free would become paying customers in the future.
- Concerns were expressed about the impact of the proposal particularly on children from the most deprived households. A request was made for some modelling to take place which would identify the cost of continuing to provide free swimming to those who are in receipt of free school meals. Officers are now working on this modelling and will report back to Members.
- Members also raised the concern of the loss of secondary spend, that is, for example, the potential reduction in spending on refreshments if some do not convert to be paying customers.
- Members were reassured that an amount for leisure activity is considered to be included as part of the foster carer's allowance.

- Members were informed that research has found that, with regard to people over 65 years old, price is not a major determinant of whether they swim. Many in that age range benefit from free swimming even though they have the ability to pay.

### **4.3 MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSES (£68k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

This proposal seeks alternative providers for the current facilities at Wallasey Beach and Kings Parade. There is also an intention to remove the subsidy from Arrowe Park Golf Course by steps which include re-profiling the use of the club house and shop. It is also intended to improve the offer at The Warrens Golf Course.

#### **Committee Members' Comments**

- Members queried whether any capital spend was required for the golf courses and were informed that drainage work was required at Arrowe Park golf course.
- Members were reassured that there are alternative providers available with whom the Council could potentially work.

## **5. SERVICE CHANGES – EDUCATION AND MENTAL HEALTH**

### **5.1 CHILD & ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH (CAMHS) (£100k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

The previous dedicated Government grant to the local authority to fund CAMHS is now part of children's services base budget which has reduced over time; it is proposed to reduce this funding further. Whilst there continues to be significant need for services to support vulnerable children and young people with emotional and mental health issues, additional CAMHS funding is being received through the "Future in Mind" bid, and new ways of working are being considered; it is in this context that the budget proposals are being progressed. In light of further feedback following the meeting, there is further exploration underway about how these service changes can be safely made.

#### **Committee Members' Comments**

Whilst there were no specific comments at the workshop, the following feedback has been subsequently received from a member (with the Chair's agreement):

- The proposal will affect a team which works with approximately 160 (at any one time) of the most complex and vulnerable children who have high level risk. The ability of the team to respond in a timely manner when acute risk situations occur would be affected. Therefore, there is a risk that issues could escalate and reach crisis point.
- For those children who require longer-term therapy, the therapy can often be for up to 6 months duration. It is suggested that there would need to be a lead-in period to any funding changes so that children's therapy can be safely concluded.
- It is suggested that where any change in funding is deemed absolutely necessary, a staged approach is utilised so that funding reductions are staggered over time.

## **6. SERVICE CHANGES – PUBLIC HEALTH**

### **6.1 FUNDING OF COUNCIL HEALTH SERVICES (£2,271k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

This relates to the reduction or cessation of temporary funding support by Public Health for the following programmes:

- Environmental Health – A reduction in contribution to this service, which is concerned with all aspects of the natural and built environment affecting human health.
- Wellbeing 4 All – A reduction in contribution to this service which helps people, their families and carers develop and maintain connections with friends, family and the wider community. It provides opportunities for individuals, families and carers to support each other and to plan ahead for care.
- Free Swimming - This funding supported the extension of the availability of free swimming for elderly, carers and juniors during holidays, and Military personnel.
- Youth and Play - This funding supported CYPD work with a focus on the provision of the Response service and their outreach working with young people at risk from alcohol or drug abuse. It also supported the existing provision of childhood services and parenting in children's centres.

The original funding was agreed as a two year allocation made available by Public Health.

### **6.2 HEALTH TRAINERS / PROMOTION (£838k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

This service provides a range of health and well-being activities to engage with those living in the 20% most deprived areas of Wirral. It includes a health promotion service delivering health improvement programmes, frontline staff training and is supported by a library of evidence-based health promotion resources and health trainers to facilitate engagement with those people who are less likely to take up activities that support positive lifestyle / behaviour change. The service is underperforming in key areas and the contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The provision of community health services is currently being reviewed with the intention of commissioning new programmes appropriate to local requirements.

### **6.3 SCHOOL HUBS (£50k)**

#### **Summary of Proposal**

This scheme supports pilot primary school hubs working to intervene earlier with children and families to develop resilience and prevent more intensive interventions being required long term. The Hubs sit within their local communities, where integrated locality working is being strengthened for all children aged 0-19 years. The hubs seek to build support for children and families around their local primary school. The projects were initially set up on a time-limited grant basis which expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016.

## 6.4 DECOMMISSION CONTRACTS

### Summary of Proposals

**Recovery through nature programme (£51k):** This project involves supporting drug and alcohol users towards recovery by engagement in structured programmes of work within National Trust or local parkland settings. The contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 when similar services will be provided from within the core Drug and Alcohol Service Contract.

**Data for Drugs and Alcohol Service (£39k):** This service was initially commissioned with the intention of providing data activity and analysis relating to Drug and Alcohol Services. The contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 when this service will be provided from within the Public Health Commissioning Support Unit.

**Workforce training programme (£30k):** This service was initially commissioned with the intention of improving the competence and confidence of the local workforce, in order to deliver high quality drug and alcohol treatment services and better outcomes for clients. The contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 when this service will be provided from within the core Drug and Alcohol Service Contract.

**BME Health Improvement Service (£53k):** This service aims to improve engagement with the BME community to address the issue of poor representation within health improvement services. This contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The provision of community health services is currently being reviewed with the intention of commissioning new programmes appropriate to local requirements.

## 6.5 CONTRACT REDUCTIONS

### Summary of Proposals

**Get Into Reading (£132k):** The aim of the service is to improve the health and wellbeing of people by the provision of weekly reading groups in a range of locations, particularly targeting libraries and community venues in the 20% most deprived areas. The service is underperforming in key areas and the contract concludes on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. The provision of community health services is currently being reviewed with the intention of commissioning new programmes appropriate to local requirements.

**Young People's Outreach Service (£46k):** This service provides a safeguarded universal and targeted sexual health and well-being outreach, education and training programme to young people in Wirral, prioritising those at greatest need. An efficiency saving of 25% has been negotiated with the current provider whilst maintaining an effective service.

**HIV Prevention Service (£27k):** This service provides specialist outreach, prevention and promotion to high risk groups to prevent the spread of HIV in Wirral and promote early diagnosis through point of care testing. An efficiency saving of 25% has been negotiated with the current provider whilst maintaining an effective service.

**On-Line Counselling for Young People (£25k):** This service provides a confidential, preventative on-line support service for young people across Wirral that is tailored to addressing the emotional health and wellbeing needs of those aged 11 to 19 years old. An efficiency saving of 25% has been negotiated with the current provider whilst maintaining an effective service.

## **6.6 PUBLIC HEALTH BUDGET REDUCTIONS (£239k)**

### **Summary of Proposal**

This consists of three vacant posts and reductions based on a reduction in need in Health checks, Social Isolation and Medicines Management provision.

## **6.7 PUBLIC HEALTH GRANT REDUCTION (£3M)**

### **Summary of Proposal**

This is a projected reduction pending formal announcement of the Public Health Grant.

### **Committee Members' Comments for the Public Health options:**

- Members were informed that the provision of free swimming under this saving option is in addition to the item discussed earlier under the Leisure concessions option. This option relates to non- recurrent funding provided in the previous two financial years 14-16.
- Members were reassured that the budget reduction for Youth and Play did not result in a reduction of service. It was confirmed that equivalent activity has been commissioned as part of other contracts and will not result in a loss of service.
- Members expressed concern regarding the potential impact of the proposals on deprived communities. For services such as health trainers and the BME health improvement service, survey work undertaken during the summer has reported that current provision is complicated and hard to navigate for local people. There is an opportunity for the future offer of information and advice services to be streamlined to provide a coherent and consistent offer to local people.

## **Appendix 1 – Workshop Attendance**

### **Members of Families and Wellbeing Policy & Performance Committee:**

Moira McLaughlin  
Angela Davies  
Irene Williamson  
Janette Williamson  
Treena Johnson  
Cherry Povall  
David Bruce-Joyce  
Alan Brighthouse  
Walter Smith  
Denise Roberts  
Bruce Berry  
Tony Norbury  
Phillip Brightmore  
Mark Harrison (Parent Governor Rep)

### **Cabinet member:**

Chris Jones

### **Officers:**

Clare Fish	Strategic Director, Families and Wellbeing
Julie Webster	Head of Public Health
Graham Hodgkinson	Director of Adult Social Services
Julia Hassall	Director of Children's Services
Damian Walsh	Head of Sport and Recreation
Mike Callon	Team Leader – Performance / Scrutiny
Alan Veitch	Scrutiny Officer

### **Apologies:**

Councillor Wendy Clements