

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP – 2016/17 BUDGET AMENDMENT

Date of Budget Council: Thursday 3 March 2016

Date submitted: Monday 29 February 2016

Proposed by: Cllr Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by: Cllr Alan Brighouse

Council notes the Cabinet recommendation with the following observations:

Council recognises that a number of the suggested economies and changes in service levels have proved impracticable. A number of service changes have been found to be unreasonable or unrealistic, especially the suggested changes to library services.

A thorough examination of the plans to reorganise the School Crossing Patrol service is required. This cannot rely on the promised full risk assessment alone but work in each community to take account of the road conditions and concerns of parents. The pressure on schools' budgets is such, along with pensions and national insurance, that any proposals to require them to contribute remain unreasonable.

Council, therefore, agrees to reinstate for 2016/17 the amount of £90,000 removed from the School Crossing Patrols budget. As an amount has been set aside to cover savings deemed to be high risk, Council agrees to the use of the Revenue Budget Contingency to fund the cost of reinstating the School Crossing Patrol budget saving.

Council recognises that the change from in-house services to the commissioning of services from other bodies is a long established process from which lessons are still being learned.

Council believes that the closure of the Lyndale School and the anguished debate about the re-provision of services at Girtrell Court underline the need to work closely with service users and their families. Council has a duty of care to ensure their concerns are fully addressed.

In the case of Girtrell Court, Council requests that the Director of Adult Social Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health produce regular reports to Members. These must set out how a range of sufficient quality alternative services is to be achieved. Members would be failing in their duty if they were not to seek assurance about the quality, availability and capacity of the alternatives.

Council notes the release of various reserves and balances to assist the setting of this year's budget. Council is well aware of the criticism frequently tossed in the direction of local authorities regarding the accumulation of funds that are resting in various accounts and believes this aspect must be tackled head on.

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Council has a duty to ensure that these are reviewed, not just in the run up to Budget Cabinet, but during the year. Council, therefore, requests an examination of these funds and a report in November on that work.

Council recognises that successive capital programmes have had a degree of slippage. In addition to this, Council is aware of the potential capital receipts most likely to be available over the next year.

The Capital Programme as set out should be augmented by the early release of £1million to enable a programme of investment in road improvements and road safety. Such an investment programme should examine the real benefits that would result from the introduction of 20mph zones, traffic calming and road widening to provide adequate access to properties. These can be drawn up, considered and assessed in close cooperation with the Constituency Committees so that, amongst other issues, the damage to verges and footways by over-riding and the inconvenience caused to residents can be addressed.

Council believes that the promotion of Wirral's leisure economy and tourism needs to be augmented. Council requests an examination of the amounts of £175,300 in the budget for the Press Office and £224,300 for Corporate Marketing with a view to achieving greater added value, the aim being to release funding spent on staffing into promotional activity.

Finally, Council recalls the principle of spending 'less money on ourselves'. Council calls on the Leader to reduce the budget allocated to his Executive Support Officer ('Services to Members') and re-direct those funds to the Welfare Rights Service so that the income of the most vulnerable can be enhanced and people receive help where it is most needed. The aim should be to secure an additional £40,000 for these services to boost their capacity.

Council approves the statutory calculations associated with the decision to increase the Wirral Council element of the Council Tax by 3.99% for 2016/17 which includes the 2% increase in respect of Adult Social Care.

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 17 December 2015 calculated the Council Tax Base 2016/17 for the whole of the properties in its area as 90,481.9 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2016/17 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) ("the Act");

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- a) £120,274,139 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2016/17 (item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:
- i) £798,891,200 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) £678,617,061 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) £1,329.26 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2016/17. 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
£886.17	£1,033.87	£1,181.56	£1,329.26
E	F	G	H
£1,624.65	£1,920.04	£2,215.43	£2,658.52

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 2016/17 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 4% or above for those authorities with Adult Social Care responsibilities.

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Wirral – Basic Amount of Council Tax Comparison For Referendum

	2015/16	2016/17	Change	Change
	£	£	£	%
Band D	1,278.26	1,329.26	51.00	3.99

To note that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service issue 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. The Precepts are as indicated in the tables.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside

A	B	C	D
£108.53	£126.62	£144.71	£162.80
E	F	G	H
£198.98	£235.16	£271.33	£325.60

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

A	B	C	D
£48.59	£56.69	£64.79	£72.89
E	F	G	H
£89.09	£105.29	£121.48	£145.78

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 2016/17 for each of the categories of dwellings.

Total Council Tax for Wirral

A	B	C	D
£1,043.29	£1,217.18	£1,391.06	£1,564.95
E	F	G	H
£1,912.72	£2,260.49	£2,608.24	£3,129.90