

**CABINET****Monday, 17 February 2020****2020/21 BUDGET PROPOSALS SCRUTINY REPORT****Councillor Pat Hackett, Leader of the Council, said:**

“Making sure Members of all parties have the chance to properly scrutinise the Council’s budget and the proposals to save money is vital. It brings the expertise and experience of all Members into the process, and always generates helpful debates and constructive feedback. The Cabinet places on record its thanks to every Member who participated in this process.”

**REPORT SUMMARY**

This report sets out the feedback from the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees in relation to the Budget Proposals for 2020/21. This follows a series of budget scrutiny workshops held during January. There are separate reports from each of the committees, to which links are included in Appendix 1. These capture the issues raised and general feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members at these sessions.

As the report addresses the proposals for the 2020/21 budget, it relates to all wards in the Borough.

The report is not a key decision.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Cabinet is requested to consider the content of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reports as part of its deliberations in developing a budget recommendation for Council.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 This report has been produced to enable the Cabinet to consider the feedback of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees in developing a budget recommendation to Council.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The approach to scrutinising the 2020/21 budget proposals is consistent with previous years. No other options were considered.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the request of the Members, the budget scrutiny process was revised in this municipal year, with budget proposals for 2020/21 reviewed as part of the four public Overview and Scrutiny Meetings in January. This process replaced the closed workshop sessions utilised in previous years. Information presented to each Committee, together with copies of the meeting minutes can be accessed using the links set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 **Adult Care & Health:** A range of questions were asked by Members regarding the proposed changes included within the budget proposals. Questions raised by Members focussed on the achievability of savings from the Review of Care Packages and provider efficiency savings, with more information also requested on fee rates set by the Joint Strategic Commissioning Board. The Committee also requested that better use of technology should not directly replace human interaction and requested a demonstration of the planned Electronic Financial Assessments system to ensure that the interests of service users are protected. A further session is arranged to discuss some of the specifics of the proposals in more detail on 11 February 2010.
- 3.3 **Children & Families:** The Committee discussed the new demand management approach for Looked After Children, which gives a projected budget saving of £1.27m, resulting from more focus on children being rehabilitated at home. The Committee highlighted the need for the Directorate to ensure that Looked After Children receive the most appropriate and excellent care, having particular mind to the stability of placements.
- 3.4 **Environment:** Members discussed aspects of the budget proposals, including streetlighting, garden waste, gritting, car parking and leisure services. It was noted that climate change proposals would not be known until an action plan was more developed.
- 3.5 **Business:** With regard to the delivery of a new organisational structure and operating model, it was confirmed to the Committee that there are no plans for compulsory redundancies. Confirmation was also provided that extensive due diligence would be undertaken before any new investments were made and that the Council would not invest in anything that was not ethical or exposed it to significant risk. Regarding property investments, it was acknowledged that the Council was

able, if it wished, to purchase property that had an anchor tenant and become a landlord, with the Council employing a company to manage that investment, but many options would be considered before investment decisions were made. It was confirmed that the 2020/21 savings proposals did not represent cuts in services, given the Cabinet's steer to officers. Anticipated income from the Wirral Growth Company (WGC) is expected in future years following the approval of the Partnership Business Plan with Muse that will be presented at Cabinet for approval on 24 February 2020. Contract savings included in budget proposals are expected to flow from a review of all contracts to determine the most appropriate course of action to reduce costs, including renegotiation, non-renewal and consideration of alternative approaches to commissioning. Further details on the technical detail behind the re-profiling of the Minimum Revenue Provision were requested by the Committee, along with details of the unachieved savings from 2019/20 of £6.03m.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of this report. The financial implications of the proposed budget are set out in a separate report to the Cabinet.

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report. No requirement for formal budget consultation has been identified for any of the current 2020/21 budget proposals.

5.2 The Director of Finance has a personal responsibility to set a balanced budget each year and has confirmed the robustness of estimates used in a separate statement submitted to Cabinet.

#### **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS**

6.1 Although there are no risks arising directly from this report, the risks associated with proposals included in the 2020/21 budget will be assessed as individual activities are taken forward.

#### **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1 There are no risk implications arising as a result of this report.

#### **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1 This report summarises the outcome of engagement with Overview and Scrutiny Committees in reviewing the Council's 2020/21 budget proposals. Separate consultation activities will be delivered where there is a requirement to do so.

#### **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no equality implications arising directly from this report.

## 10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising directly as a result of this report and there will be no impact on CO2 emissions.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** **Shaer Halewood**  
Director of Finance and Investment  
telephone: 0151 691 8688  
email: [shaerhalewood@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:shaerhalewood@wirral.gov.uk)

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

APPENDIX 1 - OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINUTES

### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Adult Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>29<sup>th</sup> January 2020</b>
<b>Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020</b>
<b>Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>28<sup>th</sup> January 2020</b>
<b>Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>30<sup>th</sup> January 2020</b>

**APPENDIX 1  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORTS AND MINUTES**

**Adult Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**29 January 2020 Agenda reports pack & minutes:**

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=819&MId=8323&Ver=4>

**Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**23 January 2020 Agenda reports pack and minutes:**

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=758&MId=7984&Ver=4>

**Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**28 January 2020 Agenda reports pack & minutes:**

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=818&MId=7989&Ver=4>

**Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**30 January 2020 Agenda reports pack & minutes:**

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=759&MId=7994&Ver=4>