

## Appendix 5

### Service Committee's Budget Consultation Report Minute extracts for Policy and Resources Committee

#### **Adult Social Care and Health Committee – Monday 18 January 2021**

Graham Hodgkinson, Director of Care and Health introduced the report of the Director of Resources and outlined that the report formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process and gave the Adult Social Care and Health Committee opportunity to comment on the proposals that fall within its remit, which would enable those comments to be presented for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in February 2021.

The report included a savings proposal through a service review of the day services for people with Learning Disabilities provided by Wirral Evolutions. The review's aim was to manage the cost of current provision through service changes with potential savings of £500,000.

Members felt that there was no need to further comment on the proposals whilst the public consultation was ongoing, and the comments the Committee made on the budget options at the previous meeting were still pertinent and should still be considered.

#### **Resolved – That**

**the resolutions agreed under Minute Item 19 at the previous meeting of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee on the budget options be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee as part of the budget consultation. (see resolutions for minute 19 from meeting held on 19 November 2020 below)**

#### **Resolutions for Minute 19 from Adult Social Care and Health Committee – Thursday 19 November 2020:**

##### ***Resolved: That***

***(1) Adult Care and Health Committee wishes to protect services where a reduction in budget would lead to more costly demand pressures occurring subsequently.***

***(2) Adult Care and Health Services will contribute significantly to savings over the next 5yrs by aspiring to delivering it's services efficiently, to a high standard and in a way that ensures people can be independent for as long as possible.***

***(3) Committee has considered all of the options and wishes to proceed with;***

***Budget Option 2- £500,00 saving from Wirral Evolutions***

***Budget Option 3- Strength based assessments as well as all of the in-year savings to be re-profiled into 21/22***

***For the reasons stated above, them being that cuts impacting on the quality of services will lead to greater costs in future years.***

***(4) We therefore reject;***

***Budget Option 1- Rationalising contracts to the voluntary community and faith sector.***

***Budget option 4- Discontinuing paying the real living wage fee rate to care providers.***

***Budget option 5- Reduction of NHS care providers- Social care contracts.***

***Budget option 6- Adult social care staffing reduction***

***Budget option 7- Public Health staffing reduction.***

***(5) Committee believes steps should be taken that will ensure a more effective operation of the shared aids and adaptation services with a view to a co-ordinated and improved services.***

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## **Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee – Thursday 21 January 2021**

This report formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process, as set out in the Constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22. Policy and Resources Committee had to recommend a 2021/22 balanced budget proposal to the Council for its meeting in March 2021, and this Committee had been given 6 proposals to consider.

Gail Mooney described the work so far including a consultation which had been launched on 21 December 2020 and closed on 22 January. This had included an online portal and surveys. Almost 13,000 people had accessed the portal and about 2,600 surveys had been completed. Part of registering comments was to provide a postcode which would allow an analysis of responses by area. Many ideas and questions had been suggested and all would be considered. There had also been question and answer sessions and petitions were expected. Policy and Resources Committee on 17 February would have full details of what had been received and a summary. Officers explained that the short municipal year caused by the Covid-19

pandemic made the timescales very short, and the costs on the Council of the pandemic had created a budget deficit which needed to be covered.

Members expressed strong concerns and frustration that there were options provided that had not previously been >to this Committee for consideration.

Each proposal was then discussed and comments included:

#### Culture and Business Economy Savings

These had been agreed in November and Members had no issues with them.

#### Close Europa Pools

Members were informed that the element of Europa Pools which was more expensive to operate was the fun pool, and there had been many requests to keep the competitive pool open as it was the only one in the borough with a grandstand and a movable floor.

Financial figures were not available which made an informed decision impossible.

There would be an effect on ability to exercise which could impact on the Leisure Strategy, where Sport England would be undertaking a detailed needs analysis.

Europa Pools was not included in the latest business plan for the redevelopment of Birkenhead but remained as an option.

There were capital works needed at the fun pool to bring it up to standard.

#### Pause re-opening of Woodchurch Leisure Centre

The delay was likely to be until April 2022.

There were worries that it could be regarded as 'mothballed' and the delay would be used to justify permanent closure, but Members were informed that there were plans at the site for developments including new 3G football pitches and the improvement of existing grass pitches. The pool was in good condition.

This was another element that would impact on opportunities for exercise following the pandemic, which had benefits regarding physical and mental health and activity.

#### Review of 4 Golf Courses

Since the development of the initial savings option based on the provision of all golf as a non-statutory service, it had transpired that Hoylake Golf Course could not be included in the review as there was a Development Agreement in place until December 2022. Furthermore, the course is committed as a support facility and practice course for the 2023 Open Championship.

In 2020 Environment Scrutiny Committee had considered the future of golf courses in detail connected with call-in of a decision and had put forward proposals. Some of these were being implemented including plans, delayed by the pandemic, to develop Arrowe Park with improved Clubhouse and a sports village, and the recruitment of a head greenkeeper.

Brackenwood was important due to archaeological finds.

There may be opportunity to generate income around the Open Championship in 2023.

Courses were being surveyed to see what was involved in bringing them up to a good standard.

There had been a surge in play after the first lockdown.

Golf was important to the Leisure Strategy and the courses were important for introducing new people to golf.

### Review of Museums Service

Members were informed that £212,000 of the proposed savings of £327,000 related to the Williamson. Initial savings were based on the inclusion of the Priory and Tramway Museum however these were subsequently removed.

The Williamson had recently had lighting upgraded and was a hub of cultural activities.

Artwork could be sold to generate funds however the museum had accredited museum status and could apply for specific funding pots which may not be available if it were to sell off artwork and so may not be available to the Council. Closing could actually create a negative effect on future budgets.

Members had received many letters and emails opposing the closure of the Williamson as people found relaxation, solace and socialising there.

The venue could be marketed for corporate business use.

It was a hub of the community with international connotations.

When the pandemic ends Members would want a Wirral worth living in and the Williamson was part of that – a jewel in the crown.

There may be legal covenants preventing any other use however further investigatory work with Legal services would be required to establish the extent of this.

### Royden Park Commercial Development - Phase 1

It was unclear whether the income generated by the high ropes activity planned for Royden Park would affect the budget of this Committee.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021 consider the comments on the budget proposals which fall under the remit of the Tourism, Communities and Leisure Committee.**

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## **Economy, Regeneration & Development Committee – Tuesday 26 January 2021**

The report of the Director of Resources formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process, as set out in the Constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22. Policy and Resources Committee had to recommend a 2021/22 balanced Budget proposal to the Council for its meeting in March 2021. The Committee was asked to consider and provide feedback on Budget proposals.

The Director of Law and Governance advised that it was helpful for the public to understand that the process this year differed from other years. He stated that this municipal year was truncated, and things had gone through at speed. The normal budget consideration had not happened because of the timescales required. Members of the Committee had received the options by way of workshops and the Committee's suggestion then went to Policy and Resources Committee.

The public consultation was underway, and the final settlement figure central Government had not been received so the figures were estimates based on experience. The Director for Regeneration and Place stated that the budget looked to capitalise on National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) and Council Tax projections. Initiatives such as integrating Birkenhead Market would assist with this as would the proposals around the disability access budget. All Council offices are compliant, so any future adaptations could be met by the existing budget. The chair commented that anything we want to draw down on in the capital budget can be brought back to committee.

**RESOLVED – That the budget proposals which fall under the remit of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee be presented for consideration to the Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021.**

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## **Housing Committee – Wednesday 27 January 2021**

Alan Evans, Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report of the Director of Resources and outlined that the report formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process and gave the Housing Committee opportunity to comment on the proposal that falls within its remit, this would enable those comments to be presented for consideration by policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in February 2021.

The report included a savings proposal to Cease support for Community Alarms with a potential saving of £500,000.

The Chair commented that further information had been requested regarding this budget proposal at the workshop on 26 November 2020.

The Director of Regeneration and Place stated that further information had been sought from service providers who were given questionnaires at the same time the public consultation began. He stated it had been hard to get a full response due to staffing issues associated with Covid-19. He also clarified that while this saving was

being considered for the Housing Service, Adult Social Care was looking into digital devices that would perform a similar function at a much lower cost.

Members stated that without further information on the impact that this budget proposal might have on those that currently benefit from it, it was not possible to make informed comments at this meeting.

Members expressed concerns on the effect it would have on vulnerable people.

Lisa Newman, Head of Operational Housing Services clarified that the budget proposal wouldn't remove the ability of residents to have a community alarm; but it would remove the council's contribution to their funding. The service would still be available with responsibility for full payment going to the provider or the resident.

The Director of Regeneration and Housing stated that further information from service providers would be received shortly and would be fed back to Committee Members for comment.

### **Resolved - That**

**Committee notes the report and would like to communicate all concerns raised with the Policy and Resources Committee, and; if information is forthcoming within the relevant timeframe, a workshop be arranged of this committee in the interim.**

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### **Children, Young People & Education Committee – Thursday 28 January 2021**

Vicki Shaw, Head of Legal Services, reminded the Committee that due to the current governance arrangements having only been in place since October 2020, there had been insufficient time to enable the usual full budget consultation process, and therefore the complete public consultation response nor the final Local Government finance settlement figure were yet available. However, the item before the Committee was its opportunity to make public comments on the budget proposals, and those comments would be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee, who would then recommend a final budget proposal to Council.

Paul Boyce OBE, Director for Children, Families and Education then introduced the report, which formed part of the budget setting process and included two savings proposals in appendix 1 for consideration. It was reported that the options were arrived at following a review of all council statutory and discretionary services to support children and young people in the borough, and had been put out to public consultation in the context of the significant budget reductions the council was facing.

Members discussed the £200,000 potential saving in youth provision and noted that there had been public interest in this proposal, particularly in relation to The Hive, and queried whether the proposal was a reduction on any previously committed funding. It was confirmed that Wirral Council had provided 3 non-contractual grants of £400,000 per year to The Hive up to 2019/20, in order to give the provider an

opportunity to increase income streams with a view to becoming self-sustainable. A further £400,000 grant had been agreed for the 2020/21 financial year to continue to support The Hive in its efforts to become self-sustainable. Paul Boyce confirmed that the figure of £200,000 within the report had been derived from a service-wide review of youth services funding, and that given the current situation and overall youth provision budget, it was felt that The Hive was the most logical place for the £200,000 savings to be taken from. It was confirmed that there had been no prior commitment to funding for The Hive in the 2021/22 budget.

The Committee further discussed the overall allocation of funding for youth services across the borough and noted that the proposed allocation of funding to The Hive was still significant when compared to similar provisions in other areas. It was queried whether a Service Level Agreement had been agreed with The Hive and if so, whether those contractual agreements had been met in 2020/21. Members acknowledged the ongoing pressure of Covid-19 on such services, and reinforced the view that The Hive delivered a much valued service to the children within the borough.

**RESOLVED – That both the comments made at the Children, Young People and Education Committee budget workshop and during this Committee meeting be considered by Policy & Resources Committee as part of the budget consultation.**

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## **Environment, Climate Emergency & Transport Committee – Monday 01 February 2021**

The report of the Director of Resources formed part of the Council's formal budget setting process, as set out in the Constitution and in accordance with the legal requirements to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2021/22. Policy and Resources Committee had to recommend a 2021/22 balanced Budget proposal to the Council for its meeting in March 2021. It was good practice for service committees to consider and feedback on Budget proposals.

On Friday, 18th December 2020 the Policy and Resources Committee approved the 'Draft Revenue Budget 2021/22 - Proposals for Consultation' to begin public consultation on 21 December 21 to 22 January. The consultation was primarily conducted through the council's specialist "Have Your Say" online portal but included many other methods including an online questionnaire; an ideas board for residents to post their 'ideas' and suggestions about the council budget; paper copies of the survey, including an easy read version; 'Virtual' Public Events for residents, young people and council staff; Council staff Facebook page; directly to the project team, Councillors, MPs and Senior Officers; and a specific email inbox. Results included 2,715 completed questionnaires, 236 "ideas" added to the Ideas Board and 74 questions. There was a relatively even spread of responses from the four Wirral constituencies. Full details of the responses were circulated to Members. Most comments were categorised predominantly into three themes: Children's

Services including The Hive, arts and culture (in particular noting retention of the Williamson Art Gallery) and refuse collection.

It was explained that this year the budget consultation process was truncated because of the shorter period of meetings caused by the pandemic, and the budget was under considerable pressure due to various effects linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. The final settlement figures from Government had not been received but the Committee were being asked their views on the options offered although Members had a duty to the whole of borough to set a balanced budget on 2 March.

Budget proposals were:

- Options Review of the Neighbourhood Services Directorate
- Additional and increased parking charges: Whole scale car parking review
- Stopping School Crossing Patrols
- Reduction in grass cutting and maintenance of roadside verges and all Parks and Open Spaces
- Amenity space and grass verge maintenance cessation
- Closure of Public Conveniences
- 3 weekly collection of general rubbish
- Contract Efficiency Savings with BIFFA
- Income generated from establishing targeted and discretionary environmental enforcement

Members expressed the opinion that they did not want to see many of the options but were forced by the temporary budget situation. They were heartened that the feedback from the consultation showed that the public endorsed the Committee's initial recommendations, including a rejection of both cuts to school crossing patrols and closure of public toilets and that there were positive suggestions such as rewilding that should allow for longer term benefits which were endorsed by the public. They discussed the application and consequences of rewilding in certain areas and acknowledged again that there was potential to reduce expenditure and assist biodiversity by appropriate reductions in grass cutting and maintenance. It was recognised that features such as flower meadows cannot be created without cost. It was agreed that there would need to be consultation between officers, members and local residents about the appropriate treatment of specific small open spaces. It was also suggested that income generating options made at the workshops could be explored in the future utilising experience of officers.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee endorses the feedback from the budget workshops and recommends that the comments made during this meeting be considered by Policy and Resources Committee as part of the budget consultation.**