

BUDGET PROPOSAL WITH EFFECT OF COUNCILLOR JO BIRD'S AMENDMENTS INCORPORATED

Resolved (14:1) – That the Committee:

- (1) Considered the response to the financial proposals forming a draft budget for the purposes of consultation under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act, set out as:**

- Appendix 1 Report of the Section 151 officer as to the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves**
- Appendix 2 Savings, income and efficiencies proposals**
- Appendix 3 Five year Medium-Term Financial Plan**
- Appendix 4 Budget consultation**
- Appendix 5 Policy & Service Committee budget proposals feedback**
- Appendix 6 Pressures/Investments**
- Appendix 7 The position for the Dedicated Schools Grant**
- Appendix 11 Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

and approved the same as the basis of the formulation of the draft budget subject to the following alterations and additions to the supporting proposals as set out at Appendix 2. These being:

- (a) That the savings proposal listed at Appendix 2 headed “Permanent Closure and Demolition of Woodchurch Leisure Centre” be amended to contain an additional element to the proposal that:**

Demolition of the Woodchurch Leisure Centre will not be progressed whilst a process is undergone to consider the feasibility of any expressions of interest submitted to the Council by 30 September 2022 for the transfer of the Leisure Centre to be operated by a community group or trust. Any transfer of the Leisure Centre will include the earmarked capital costs of £330k for demolition being made available to assist with required capital maintenance works to the site. In addition, if the Directorate is able to make any efficiencies above and beyond the proposed savings at the end of Quarter 1 in 2022/23, that this will be earmarked towards project support for any successful bid to transfer the facility to a community organisation. This does not affect the proposed revenue saving.

- (b) That a report be brought as soon as practicable to the Policy & Resources Committee to establish a Community Asset Transfer policy in respect of services and assets identified in the budget proposals, which should be fully integrated with the Council’s Community Wealth Building Strategy and the principles adopted within it.**

- (c) That the savings proposal listed at Appendix 2 headed “Review of Anti-Social Behaviour Team” be deleted. This will remove the proposal of £50k to review the Anti-Social Behaviour Team as the Committee is acutely aware of the blight that anti-social behaviour has on our residents’ lives and the detrimental impact it has on our communities. The £50,000 attached to this saving may be found from a different resource, that being using the Annual Community Safety Grant which the Council receives from the Police and Crime Commissioner which is as yet unallocated for 2022/23. This will both protect our communities and save jobs.
- (d) That the Director for Neighbourhoods ensure that the forthcoming reports to Tourism, Communities, Culture & Leisure Committee contain:
- (i) a full exploration of all proposals submitted during the consultation period for Hoylake and Brackenwood golf courses, including options for increasing fees, alternative provision and environmental projects;
 - (ii) delivery plans for a children’s activity area in the main swimming pool at Europa Pools on dedicated days and school holidays; and
 - (iii) a consideration of how future leisure provision may be underpinned by the Community Wealth Building Strategy and is best able to deliver the Wirral Plan objectives to reduce health inequalities in the Borough.
- (e) That expressions of interest be invited for the transfer of one or more golf courses to a community run body, to be submitted by 30th September 2022, to be developed as a business case and assessed by the Council. This will not affect the saving proposal to come into effect as of 1st April 2022, following Budget Council.
- (f) **That the savings proposal listed at Appendix 2 headed “Closure of Europa Fun/Leisure Pool & Enhanced Gym Offer” be amended to pause re-opening of Europa Fun/Leisure Pool & Enhanced Gym Offer until 31 March, 2023. This will not affect the saving proposal to come into effect as of 1st April 2022, following Budget Council.**
- (g) That a report be brought to a future meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee in respect of a review of the Council’s Social Value Policy, which is requested to take place within the coming six months and focussed on an ambition to make it more ambitious in its targets and for it to integrate with the social value framework currently being developed by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.
- (h) That the savings proposal listed at Appendix 2 headed “Reprovision of the Library Service” be amended to reduce the savings proposals so as to make sufficient monies available so as to enable:

- ~~(i) Greasby and Rock Ferry libraries to remain operating for the purposes of community facility and library centres at a cost of £162k;~~
- ~~(ii) expressions of interest in community asset transfer of the libraries to be supported in assisting the production and implementation of business cases at a cost of £282k;~~ and
- (i) an allocation from within the 2022/23 capital programme be identified, where necessary, to enable expressions of interest in community asset transfer of the libraries that may be closed to be supported in assisting the production and implementation of business cases at a cost of £500k ; and
- (ii) libraries currently proposed to cease operation as of 1st July to continue to operate until ~~1st November 2022~~ **31st March 2023** whilst expressions of interest for their community asset transfer are sought and business cases developed and assessed, which will provide a reduction of in-year savings of ~~£470k~~ **£814k. With the use of £444,000 budget surplus and £370,000 from the £3m contingency reserve for delayed savings to support this.**

~~amounting to a reduction in Revenue savings of £162k for 2022/23 and future years and £752k for 2022/23 only with the use of the budget surplus to support this.~~

- (i) That the savings proposal listed at Appendix 2 headed “Review of Golf Offer” be amended to contain an additional element to the proposal that:

“Closure of these sites will require alternative proposals for use to be brought forward, which the Council intends as landowner will be for leisure or outdoor use only and would be appropriate to the Greenbelt where those sites are within it.”
- (j) That an additional proposal be listed at Appendix 2:
 - (i) To provide additional useable funding by adopting a proposal to reduce the temperature in occupied Council buildings by 2 degrees, which will in general create a reduced energy cost of £113k; and
 - (ii) That the £113,000 savings identified around council energy costs are re-directed into the Local Welfare Assistance Fund to be ringfenced for fuel poverty in the form of one-off flat payments to those residents in most need of assistance with their fuel bills. Residents across the Borough are currently suffering from a cost of living crisis which means many are choosing between heating and eating. To enable this to be allocated fairly, the Director of Resources is requested to establish a process that will distribute the money in an equitable manner.
- (k) Members should be kept fully informed of the response to all consultations so that the proposals brought forward tonight are seen in

context and that developments involving community asset transfer are assessed by the Policy and Resources Committee in due course.

- (2) Noted the role of the Change Programme and the approach to currently active Service Reviews in delivering budget proposals.**
- (3) Recommends that Council adopt a Revenue Budget, subject to the Local Government Finance Settlement to be issued by The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) of £330.13m.**
- (4) Recommends that Council approve any surplus funding available from a budget proposal of £330.13m to be transferred to the General Fund.**
- (5) Accordingly recommends that Council:**
 - (a) agree the summary Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) set out as Appendix 3 and adopt the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out as Appendix 11;**
 - (b) adopt the fees and charges set out as Appendix 9, with delegated authority being granted:**
 - (i) to the Section 151 Officer to update the Council's Fees and Charges Directory prior to publication before 1 April 2022**
 - (ii) to the relevant Director with portfolio, in consultation with the relevant Committee's Chair and Group Spokespersons, to vary existing fees and charges;**
 - (c) approve the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for Business Rates for 2022/23 set out as Appendix 10;**
 - (d) set and maintain the level of General Fund Balances at the higher of**
 - (i) 4% of the Council's net revenue budget, based on a locally determined assessment of the financial risks that the Council may face in the future in accordance with the report of the Section 151 Officer (Appendix 1);**
 - (e) authorise, in respect of the Budget Proposals, that the Director with portfolio undertake such actions as they consider necessary to implement the agreed Budget and deliver the savings, income and efficiency proposals developed as part of the formulation process and update Committees accordingly;**
 - (f) approve the 2022/23 Schools Budget of £316.2m.**
- (6) Recommends that Council delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Group Spokespersons of the Policy and Resources Committee, to do anything necessary to give effect to the proposals contained in the report and to address any funding**

changes, if any, arising from the final Local Government Finance Settlement once agreed by Parliament.

- (7) Recommends (subject to a separate vote at Council) that Council:**
- a. Sets the Band D Council Tax at £1,713.00 for the Wirral Borough Council element of the Council Tax, representing a general increase of 1.99% and 1.00% ringfenced increase to Adult Social Care, and the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2022/23 of £163m as detailed in Appendix 8.**
 - b. Notes that the additional precepts from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside, the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority remain in estimated form and delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer to implement any variation to the overall council tax arising from the final notification of the precepts.**