

CABINET

20 FEBRUARY 2017

BUDGET RESOLUTION 2017/18

NATIONAL CONTEXT

This Budget is being prepared in the most difficult financial position this Council has ever found itself in. We believe Local Government, and the services residents rely on, has been under attack from the Conservative Government's austerity agenda for almost seven years.

We believe their vision is of a country where residents are left to fend for themselves. The removal of the Revenue Support Grant is, in the opinion of this Cabinet, a shameful and dangerous dereliction of duty which hits the young, the elderly and the most vulnerable the hardest.

This alternative Tory reality is one where local services are only funded by Council Tax, business rates and fees and charges Council can generate. This is great for the wealthier boroughs, but terrible for those who – in the words of the Prime Minister – are Just About Managing.

The City of Westminster Council, for example, will do very nicely from these policies. Collecting business rates from the HQ's of multinational companies and raising Council Tax on multi-million pound homes and apartments, they are surely counting down the days until they are able to retain all of this income for themselves – a move which adds £1.8 BILLION every year to their bank balance.

Wirral, on the other hand, with an ageing population and areas of real deprivation and need, will lose £6 million a year, money which could have funded improvements to highways and street lighting, added extra social workers, and supported efforts to clampdown on antisocial behaviour. We will continue to lobby the Government to address this imbalance through a fairer distribution of funding.

Even Conservative Council leaders warned the government about failing local services – but, predictably, they received a very different response from Whitehall. Upon learning of Surrey County Council's plans to prop up services through a 15% Council Tax hike the Government intervened with a secret sweetheart deal for their friends in the South.

Where is Wirral's deal? Where is Wirral's support? Where are we to find the money to tackle anti-social behaviour, improve skills and training for our young people, and support vital services?

This Administration has lobbied Government for Wirral and the rest of our region to be treated fairly. It cannot be right that while Westminster is counting their billions, Wirral and our City Region colleagues are left to pinch the pennies. Either we are in this together, or we are not. Cabinet proposes that we continue to lobby the government to introduce a fair system of local government funding which recognises the needs of authorities such as Wirral.

It is absolutely worth noting, that while this Cabinet has been fighting for Wirral - calling on Government to fund local services - Wirral's Conservative Party remained silent. For a party so quick to call special meetings and adopt posture politics, no petition or lobby from them to secure a fair deal for Wirral.

SOCIAL CARE IN CRISIS

Nowhere is the Tory's failure more apparent than the crisis in social care and health. We are seeing huge waiting lists for hospital and GP appointments, people being treated on trolleys in corridors, and councils across the UK struggling to afford even basic support for the most vulnerable. This is not acceptable in a modern Britain.

Cabinet believes the Government failed to address the social care crisis in the recent Autumn Statement. The Local Government Association reported that adult social care faces a funding gap of £2.6 billion by 2020, a deficit of £60 million across health and social care here in Wirral. Locally, social care providers, charities and the NHS have united to call for more investment. The Government's response was to pass the problem on to council taxpayers.

We have little choice other than to implement the Government's 3% Care Tax levy, even while knowing this places the burden at the feet of those people least able to pay.

The crisis in social care can no longer be ignored. Council has called for an urgent meeting with the Secretary of State for Health to put Wirral's case forward.

THE WIRRAL CHALLENGE

Wirral is forced to reduce its spending, or generate more income, by at least £130 million by 2021. Our immediate challenge is to meet a £45 million funding shortfall for 2017/18.

This is happening at a time of increased need - an ageing population, deprived communities with complex needs - and rising costs of the services and support which people rely on.

Cabinet believes these reductions to be unfair and unsustainable.

However, as residents know, we refuse to allow this Government to break the services our residents rely on. We will make these difficult decisions but will deliver the 20 Pledges we committed to in our Wirral Plan.

A COLLABORATIVE BUDGET

We will never set a budget in isolation. Consultation, engagement, and conversations with residents will always underpin every decision we take.

Cabinet thanks Elected Members – of all parties – who took part in the comprehensive scrutiny process to look in detail at the budget proposals. The feedback from that process has been provided to Cabinet and has proved extremely helpful in making these difficult decisions.

DELIVERING OUR PLEDGES

Regardless of the scale of Conservative Government cuts to this Council's budget, we are a Labour Administration and our budget will be legal and sustainable, with social justice and fairness at its heart.

Our ethos as an Administration is underpinned by three core principles. These principles help inform our budget and makes sure we can deliver the savings imposed on us while still meeting our promises to Wirral residents.

- The vulnerable are safe and protected and we tackle inequality.
- Wirral is a place where employers want to invest and businesses thrive.
- We have an attractive and sustainable environment, where good health and an excellent quality of life is enjoyed by everyone who lives here.

We are now almost two years into our five-year Wirral Plan. There is still more to be done, but we have made a good start towards meeting our 20 Pledges to improve the health, wealth and quality of life enjoyed by Wirral residents. I am proud of our achievements so far. These include:-

- More than 200 new jobs have been created through our work to support local businesses, with new developments such as the Contact Company HQ and the new Wirral Metropolitan College Campus opening their doors this year.
- The state-of-the-art, £6 million new Wirral Youth Zone – the Hive – will soon open its doors, providing our young people with youth services of the very highest quality.

- We have safeguarded jobs and enabled new, innovative services to be developed for schools and people with disabilities, through our two new companies – Edsential and Wirral Evolutions.
- Our Zero-Tolerance policy towards litter and dog fouling is paying huge dividends, with more than £250,000 in fines being issued to the irresponsible people who vandalise our environment.
- We have improved almost 2,000 homes to help older people live more independently and safely, and have brought more than 500 empty properties back into use.

Next year, we will invest more than £260 million into improving residents' lives – protecting the vulnerable, improving our environment and driving economic growth.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children

We reaffirm that safeguarding vulnerable children remains this Administration's top priority. Our improvement work following the OFSTED inspection continues at pace. We received encouraging feedback from Ofsted following their first monitoring visit since the report was published. We will be investing to transform children's services, in addition to the £2 million invested in the current year to recruit more social workers, improve management and strengthen the service at all levels.

Growing our economy

We will be relentless in our drive to grow Wirral's economy. The International Golf Resort in Hoylake, our plans to transform Birkenhead, the support we will continue to provide to local high streets and employers through our partnership with Wirral Chamber of Commerce will help create thousands of jobs for local people in the coming years.

Wirral Apprenticeship Programme

As part of this drive, it is vitally important residents have the skills to excel in their careers. I am therefore delighted to announce a new investment of £150,000 in creating a Wirral Apprenticeship programme with starting salaries at the level of the Living Wage, and ask officers to immediately commence work on creating these opportunities.

Improving the environment

It is also important we enable local communities to direct resources at those things most important in their neighbourhood. Often, communities take direct action, coming together to clean up and improve their areas. To help, this budget will allocate £50,000 to support communities to enable this work, to be allocated through

our constituency committees. These initiatives can therefore continue pending the review of the role of constituency committees. Cabinet also expects any underspends within Constituency Committee budgets to be used in 2017/18.

Investing in Street Lighting

We will continue to invest in local infrastructure. I am pleased we are investing more than £4 million to improve our highways and make our roads safer. Following our multi-million investment in installing LED lights in key locations throughout the borough, I am pleased this new infrastructure investment also allocates a further £500,000 to improve our street lights.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

In some parts of the borough, anti-social behaviour remains a blight on people's lives. As part of our Transformation Programme, we have been innovative and imaginative in adopting approaches to tackle this issue; creating the first integrated community safety hub in the region where council and police staff work hand-in-hand to keep residents safe.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

Having made cuts of almost £200 million from our budget since 2010, and losing the Revenue Support Grant by 2020, we are inevitably faced with difficult decisions about how to provide services now and in the future. We have to look at the services and outcomes residents need, but also think about how we will be able to deliver them going forward.

To minimise impacts on residents, we are proposing rolling out savings across four years. Even to do this, we had to seek Government approval first and, of course, they set conditions. To keep our income at current levels we must implement Annual Council Tax rises of 1.99%, add the additional 3% Care Tax levy towards the cost of adult social care.

Our Budget proposals for the next 4 years will be based on 3 key themes:

Delivering Differently: Whilst setting an annual Budget planning over four years buys time, and allows us to develop a major, fundamental redesign of how the council works and which services it provides. Achieving change of this scale is complex and takes time, but I am committing Wirral Council to deliver a complete redesign of every service by 2020. Detailed proposals for each area will be produced throughout the year as we seek to create modern, fit for purpose, sustainable services which meet the needs of our residents. A key element of this work will involve us looking at a range of alternative delivery models.

Income & Resources: We will focus on doing better with the money we have, becoming more commercial and increasing the revenue we receive from Council Tax, Business Rates and general fees and charges.

Service Changes & Reductions: This will be the last resort, with very minimal direct service cuts and instead reductions in senior management and higher paid staff.

CAR PARKING

This Cabinet talked to residents and businesses throughout Wirral. It is clear the proposals originally put forward underestimated the potential impact on local businesses. For clarity, the original proposals regarding car park charges have been removed in their entirety. They have been replaced with a 20p increase in standard car park tariffs and a 50p charge at country parks for parking one-hour, £1 for 2 hours, or £2 all day.

We will continue to work with residents and businesses to make sure our country parks, and the organisations within them and associated with them, are able to thrive. The income generated through parking will be used to maintain the parks and ensure they remain a source of huge pride for residents.

We listened to local people, and I am pleased our new proposals have been welcomed by residents and business alike.

COUNCIL TAX

Councils in the UK are being forced to contemplate huge Council Tax rises, forcing residents to pay more for services. Cabinet believes it is unacceptable for the Government to simply pass the bill for the growing pressures in adult social care back to the most needy and say: "If you want the services, you will have to pay for them." Often the very reason they need social care support from the local authority is because they are unable to pay for it themselves.

We want to secure the best outcomes for residents, so Cabinet therefore proposes to increase Council Tax by 1.99% for the coming financial year, and to implement the Adult Social Care Precept of 3%. Overall, this works out at an increase of just over £1 per week for the average Band D property.

CONCLUSION

Once again, this budget has been extremely difficult. Seemingly endless cuts in funding and a lack of support from Central Government require this Council to make

tough decisions. This Government, and their colleagues in the Local Conservative Party, are letting down the residents in this borough.

I am proud this Labour Administration has once again delivered on its promises to the people of Wirral – taking tough decisions in setting its budget, identifying innovative solutions and getting on with the job of delivering our 20 Pledges to create a better Wirral for all of our residents. Finally, Cabinet wishes to recognise the excellent work of our staff who, in spite of the savage cuts in our budget, have continued to deliver high quality public services for the people of Wirral.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Cabinet, having had regard to the responses to the proposals announced at the 8 December 2016 meeting recommends to Budget Council for approval:-

Revenue Budget (Agenda Item 6A)

- a) The proposals for 2017/18, detailed in Appendix 1, be agreed with the change to the car parking proposals which reduce the projected income by £460,000.
- b) The Growth 2017/18, detailed in section 3.29 to 3.35, be agreed with the addition of £150,000 for Apprentices and a fund of £50,000 to provide for community clean-ups.
- c) The fees and charges, as in Appendix 2, with delegated authority being (i) given to the Section 151 Officer to update the Council's Fees and Charges Directory prior to publication before 1 April 2017; (ii) given to the relevant Director in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Section 151 Officer to vary existing fees and charges and (iii) approval of the Pricing and Charging Policy as set out in Annex 1.
- d) The level of General Fund Balances being recommended, as set out in Appendix 3, as continuing to be based on a locally determined approach based on an assessment of the financial risks that the Council may face in the future and that the Council maintains balances at, or above, this level.
- e) The use of General Fund Balances, if required, to fund the financial consequences of the finalisation of the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- f) The release of reserves, as set out in Appendix 4, to General Fund Balances to support the Revenue Budget.

- g) The Chief Financial Officer Statement regarding the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the Budget and the adequacy of the General Fund balances and reserves at Appendix 6.
- h) Endorsement of Wirral being part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding at Appendix 7.

Capital Programme and Financing (Agenda Item 6B)

- a) The new bids as detailed in Appendix 2.
- b) That any new bids supported by grant funding do not commence until written confirmation has been received from the granting authority.
- c) The Capital Programme 2017/20 (as detailed in Appendix 3).
- d) That progress on delivering the Capital Programme is presented in accordance with the agreed Capital Monitoring arrangement.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (Agenda Item 6C)

The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/21 including the:-

- a) Development of indicative proposals for the years 2018/19-2020/21 as part of the implementation of the Strategy as set out in Annex 1.
- b) Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2017/18 as set out in Annex 2.
- c) Regular updates being presented to Cabinet on the progress of the implementation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Treasury Management Strategy 2017/20 including the:-

- a) Adoption of the Prudential Indicators.
- b) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2017/18
- c) Council Officers listed in Annex G to approve payments from the Council's bank account for all treasury management activities.

Schools Budget (Agenda Item 6D)

The Schools Budget of £252,127,600 having taken account of the views and formula proposals from the Schools Forum that:

- i) The delegation of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) costs to schools are approved, subject to finalising amended schools agreements and confirmation from the Education Funding Agency (EFA).
- ii) The continuing Contributions to Combined Budgets should be £875,600
- iii) Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves totalling £568,900 should be used to set the Schools Budget.
- iv) There is a contribution to the cost of Education Services Grant (ESG) retained duties of £730,000.
- v) The funding for Education Services Grant (ESG) General Duties and School Improvement is agreed.
- vi) There is a transfer of £106,000 from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block following the transfer of central budgets to schools
- vii) The amendments to High Needs places and to the High Needs Formula are implemented from September 2017.
- viii) The Schools Forum review budgets and demands for High Needs alongside plans to undertake a review of High Needs provision following receipt of a national grant allocation of £132,000 for that purpose.
- ix) The changes to the Early Years Funding formula resulting from the receipt of additional funding are agreed with effect from the 1 April.

The Cabinet in making these recommendations has had regard to the Chief Financial Officer Statement regarding the robustness of the estimates made for the purpose of the Budget and the adequacy of the General Fund balances and reserves.

- 2 Cabinet recommends to Budget Council that a separate vote be taken in respect of Council Tax levels for 2017/18 and that :-
 - a) For Wirral Council Services the Council Tax be increased by 4.99% for 2017/18 which includes the Adult Social Care Precept of 3%.
 - b) The Wirral Council Tax will include the precepts from the Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside and from the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.

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 8 December 2016 calculated the Council Tax Base 2017/18 for the whole of the properties in its area as 91,309.5 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) (“the Act”);

- a) £127,430,400 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2017/18 (item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:
 - i) £808,854,400 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) £681,424,000 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) £1,395.59 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2017/18. 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 |
| £930.40 | £1,085.46 | £1,240.53 | £1,395.59 |
| E | F | G | H |
| £1,705.72 | £2,015.85 | £2,325.99 | £2,791.18 |

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 2017/18 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 5% or above for those authorities with Adult Social Care responsibilities.

Wirral – Basic Amount of Council Tax Comparison for Referendum

| | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | Change | Change |
|--------|----------|----------|--------|--------|
| | £ | £ | £ | % |
| Band D | 1,329.26 | 1,395.59 | 66.33 | 4.99 |

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. These have been notified as follows:-

Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside

| A | B | C | D |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| £110.65 | £129.09 | £147.53 | £165.97 |
| E | F | G | H |
| £202.85 | £239.73 | £276.62 | £331.94 |

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

| A | B | C | D |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|
| £49.56 | £57.82 | £66.08 | £74.34 |
| E | F | G | H |
| £90.86 | £107.38 | £123.90 | £148.68 |

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 2017/18 for each of the categories of dwellings.

Total Council Tax for Wirral

| A | B | C | D |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| £1,090.61 | £1,272.37 | £1,454.14 | £1,635.90 |
| E | F | G | H |
| £1,999.43 | £2,362.96 | £2,726.51 | £3,271.80 |

- 3 Cabinet thanks all of the Council Officers who provide a fantastic service to the people of Wirral.

**WIRRAL COUNCIL
REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18**

| | Base Budget 2016/17 | Base Budget (Pilot Scheme) 2017/18 |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| | £ | £ |
| INCOME | | |
| Revenue Support Grant | 50,710,000 | - |
| Business Rates Baseline | 34,827,900 | - |
| Business Rates Pilot Scheme | - | 67,941,000 |
| Business Rates Top Up | 41,630,000 | 51,834,000 |
| Business Rates S31 Grants | 2,193,700 | 6,460,000 |
| Council Tax Requirement | 120,274,100 | 127,430,400 |
| New Homes Bonus | 3,177,900 | 2,264,100 |
| Contribution to Business Rates Reserve | - | - 5,373,400 |
| Contribution from Balances & Reserves | 11,782,100 | 15,632,500 |
| FORECAST INCOME | 264,595,700 | 266,188,600 |
| | | |
| EXPENDITURE | | |
| People | | |
| Adult Care & Public Health | 71,835,700 | 75,835,700 |
| Children & Families | 74,056,600 | 79,356,600 |
| People Total | 145,892,300 | 155,192,300 |
| Environment | | |
| Environmental Protection | 28,425,000 | 27,427,900 |
| Housing & Communities | 17,126,900 | 15,886,400 |
| Leisure & Culture | 17,789,800 | 16,482,200 |
| Environment Total | 63,341,700 | 59,796,500 |
| Business | | |
| Business & Tourism | 2,360,600 | 2,560,600 |
| Transport, Technology & Infrastructure | 36,954,700 | 33,779,400 |
| Resources | 1,684,500 | 990,400 |
| Transformation & Improvement | 2,361,900 | 1,869,400 |
| Business Total | 43,361,700 | 39,199,800 |
| Revenue Contingency | | |
| Adult Social Services | 3,900,000 | 5,400,000 |
| Children and Young People | 5,000,000 | 5,000,000 |
| Other Areas | 3,100,000 | 1,600,000 |
| Contingency Total | 12,000,000 | 12,000,000 |
| FORECAST EXPENDITURE | 264,595,700 | 266,188,600 |