

CABINET, 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2018  
ITEM 6 – BUDGET 2018/19

**CONTEXT**

Each year, the Council assembles to agree its budget to provide the services it will offer to meet the needs of residents. Each year, the amount of money available in real terms to meet real needs gets smaller.

Since the Government chose the path of austerity in 2010, Wirral Council has been forced to implement more than a quarter of a billion pounds in reductions and cuts to its budget. The impact of austerity bites on the quality of life enjoyed by residents – pay freezes for public sector workers, changes to benefits and the clumsy roll out of Universal Credit, rising prices for energy and utilities and threats and fears about the future of the NHS, the needs of Wirral residents become more complex, more intense and more pronounced.

And each year, as we debate the budget, the members on the Conservative benches roll their eyes and shrug their shoulders, unmoved - and untouched - by the hardships of their national policies. They ignore the hard decisions this Council faces, braying and bellowing for the benefit of the crowd.

Elsewhere, more considered Tory voices are joining the rising tide of national concern.

Last year, bankrupt Tory controlled Surrey Council set a 15% Council Tax rise before being bailed out by the Government at the last moment to prevent the embarrassing scene of a Conservative Council setting illegal budgets to meet unrealistic Tory Government expectations.

This year, Tory controlled Northamptonshire County Council has effectively declared itself 'bust' – cancelling all spending on non-statutory services, unable to meet anything but the most basic needs of its residents.

But still – unmoved, the Tories press on with their austerity policies, oblivious and uncaring about the consequences of their policies on the lives of ordinary people.

Tory Home Secretary Amber Rudd was in meetings in this town hall the week before last – not with Councillors working to support the police, coastguard and fire service – but meeting with local Tory Councillors behind closed doors, plotting her leadership challenge no doubt.

The Tories' obsession with Austerity is rooted in their detachment from the lives of ordinary people. This budget will once again demonstrate that only a Labour administration will protect the services local residents rely upon, invest in the issues Wirral families care about and work with public sector and volunteer group partners to deliver them.

The Tories see the budget as spreadsheet management: A cut here, a reduction there, unconcerned by the real world consequences of these actions.

The Tories know the price of everything, but the value of nothing.

Labour Councillors continue to lead the campaign for the Government to treat local authorities fairly. This campaign was encouraged late last year when Secretary of State, Sajid Javid MP, appeared to buckle under pressure and suggest he was willing to revisit his flagship policy of removing the Revenue Support Grant, a policy in the opinion of this Cabinet, which would hit the young, the elderly and the most vulnerable the hardest. Whether this was political posturing, or an awakening to the reality of their failed policies, local authorities across the country await more details.

With the Government's long term plans or the impact of its Brexit policies unclear, uncertainty and worry surrounding the funding future of the police, fire service, the NHS and other public services, this Budget must again be prepared against a backdrop of difficult financial circumstances.

## **THE WIRRAL CHALLENGE**

Wirral is forced to reduce its spending, or generate more income, by more than £100 million by 2021. Our immediate challenge is to meet a £61 million funding shortfall for 2018/19.

As we have repeatedly warned, 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.

Our overall budget strategy of focussing on attracting additional revenue, transforming services and improving efficiency, will continue. This will be

underpinned by our commitment to key Labour principles of fairness and social justice.

## **INVESTING IN SOCIAL CARE**

The challenges facing families and young people in Wirral are well known. The scale of this and our response has been at the very heart of the Council's policy and budget agenda this year. Already great progress is being made, a new leadership team, a complete review of our services and processes and an improvement plan that works with national experts and local care providers to ensure we meet the expectations we set ourselves when looking after our most vulnerable young residents.

We have to prioritise making these changes and improvements and are committing £20m investment in Children's and Families' services in 2018/19.

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 Care Tax levy, even while knowing this places the burden at the feet of those people least able to pay.

## **A COLLABORATIVE BUDGET**

Again, we remind residents we are here to work for them. We will never set a budget in isolation. Consultation, engagement, and conversations with residents will always underpin every decision we take. Almost 6,000 residents took the time to give us their views on our budget, our priorities and our plans and we pledge to use this valuable feedback as decisions are made.

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 decisions.

## **DELIVERING OUR PLEDGES**

Regardless of the scale of Conservative Government cuts to this Council's budget, as a Labour Administration 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.

## **GROWING OUR ECONOMY**

We are relentless in our drive to grow Wirral's economy. In the coming days we will announce our proposal for Wirral Growth Company, the UK's largest public-sector led regeneration programme. Attracting new investment to drive our £1bn growth deal, this joint venture ensures this Council retains control over our assets and benefits from the development of new homes, offices, leisure and retail schemes and accompanying job opportunities.

As part of our work on growing the economy, we will consider innovative approaches to ensuring that as many of the benefits of growth as possible are retained within Wirral. To this end, we are keen to look at models such as community wealth building.

## **INVESTING IN WIRRAL'S ENVIRONMENT, ROADS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS**

We will continue to invest in our local infrastructure and the communities we live in. In 2018/19 we are investing more than £7million in improvements. We are leveraging interest free loans and grants to invest £1.5million in LED street lighting – not only making our roads and neighbourhoods safer, but using technology to reduce the long term running costs. Our programme will see more than £2million invested to replace and repair street lamps across the borough and other improvements to traffic, cyclist and pedestrian infrastructure.

The Council's commitment to protecting our environment and tackling climate change will continue through adopting a zero-tolerance approach to environmental crime, such as littering and dog-fouling; growing the subscriber base of the garden waste scheme; and increasing energy efficiency. Cabinet is committed to Wirral Council remaining at the green cutting edge of environmental issues and will lead the City Region in efforts to phase out single use plastics, reduction of waste and encouraging recycling.

Wirral is also playing a major role in supporting the Metro Mayor in bringing forward transformational projects such as a tidal barrage on the River Mersey.

We will continue our policy of tackling rogue private sector landlords through extending the Selective Licensing Scheme. The Council will shortly also be making a number of announcements about investing in building significant numbers of new housing units on brownfield sites.

### **TACKLING DOMESTIC ABUSE**

Domestic abuse is on the increase across the UK and government cuts and loss of funding means that previously accessible support is no longer available. Adopting a zero tolerance approach to domestic abuse is one of our key pledges. In order to support this pledge, we will invest £5,000 in supporting the Friends of the Freedom Programme in their work in supporting people whose lives have been affected by domestic abuse.

### **CAR PARKING**

We also will introduce new car parking charges at certain coastal visitor locations. In New Brighton, while this does not include Marine Point and Fort Perch Rock, it does include the Derby Pool and Kings Parade. It would also include Leasowe Lighthouse and 'the Gunsite', North Parade between Hoylake and Meols and South Parade in West Kirby. The proposed charges would be £1 for an hour, £2 for all day and £20 for those who leave their vehicles parked overnight. Officers advise us that these tariffs are reasonable and acceptable for visitors to Wirral's coastal attractions, in many cases cheaper and more favourable than charges in Liverpool, Chester and at other local attractions.

### **REWARDING AND PROTECTING OUR STAFF**

Our staff are our most important resource. As national austerity policies continue to hit the most vulnerable hardest, it is important we recognise the role council staff play in keeping our front line services operating and supporting people every day. These services have seen their workforce reduced, demand increase and have also seen pay frozen.

It is important that we do all we can to put this right, and that is why I am proud to announce that – alongside and in addition to the national pay award of 2% which we have already included in the budget, we will include a further 1% rise for our employees, which will bring us back in line with the national pay scale. This will be funded from more efficient ways of working that will include release of vacancies and headcount reduction, which will be met by voluntary redundancy wherever possible.

This Administration is committed strongly to good working practices. To that end, we will continue to work constructively with our trade unions.

## **SENIOR MANAGEMENT STAFFING CUTS**

As we make tough decisions on how to balance the budget, we must also look at efficiencies we can make in how we deliver services. As the Council continues to invest in technology and to make transformational changes to how it operates, it is right that we look to make savings amongst our most senior staff and management. The budget this year sees us reduce the cost of management by £750,000 as we make changes to how the Council works.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summary, this is a balanced budget built around our shared values. It supports the important work being done to deliver services our residents rely on. It invests in our economy, makes improvements to our environment and shares the burden fairly between all those who can afford to contribute and those who enjoy the services Wirral offers.

This is a budget, against a harsh Conservative Austerity agenda, our Labour Council can be proud of.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Cabinet, having had regard to the responses to the proposals announced at the 18 December 2017 meeting recommends to Budget Council for approval:

### Revenue Budget (Agenda Item 6)

- a) The Proposals for 2018/19 as set out at Appendix 2.
- b) The Growth for 2018/19 as set out in sections 3.21 to 3.34 of this report.
- c) The payment of an additional 1% pay award to staff as included within my resolution that will be fully funded by more efficient ways of working. This will result in a total pay increase of 3% in 2018/19. \*
- d) Approve a one-off revenue contribution to be repaid of £1.3m to the Liverpool City Region Mayoral Combined Authority to support the Single Investment Fund in 2018/19.
- e) The fees and charges, as in Appendix 3, 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 2018.
  - ii) given to the relevant Director in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and Section 151 Officer to vary existing fees and charges.
  - iii) Approval of the Pricing and Charging Policy as set out in Annex 1.
- f) The level of General Fund Balances being recommended, as set out in Appendix 4, 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.
- g) The release of reserves, as set out in Appendix 5, to General Fund Balances to support the Revenue Budget.
- h) 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.

### Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2018/21 (Agenda Item 6B)

The Treasury Management Strategy 2018/21 including:

- a) The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2018/2021.
- b) The adoption of the Prudential Indicators.
- c) The approval of the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision policy.
- a) That the Council Officers listed in Annex G to approve payments from the Council's bank account for all treasury management activities.

### Capital Programme and Financing (Agenda Item 6C)

1. That Cabinet agree and recommend to Full Council the Capital Strategy 2018/21 (Appendix 1) including the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy 2018/19 (Annex 2).
2. That the new bids as detailed in the first section of Appendix 3 totalling £19.7 million be approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme. This includes a sum of £0.7 million relating to additional project risk contingency in relation to the Dock bridges replacement scheme as detailed in paragraph 3.15 b.
3. That the bids totalling £3.7 million relating to the Leisure and Cultural Services Review (Appendix 3) are included in the programme for 2018/19 but are deferred to a later commencement date, on an individual basis, in recognition of an ongoing review.
4. That the bids totalling £4.6 million referred to the Council's Technical Design Authority (TDA) (Appendix 3) be included in the programme if they are approved by the TDA.
5. That any new bids supported by grant funding do not commence until written confirmation has been received from the granting authority.
6. That Cabinet recommend to Council for approval the Capital Programme 2018/21 (as detailed in Appendix 4).
7. That progress on delivering the Capital Programme is presented in accordance with the agreed Capital Monitoring arrangements.



### Schools Budget (Agenda Item 6D)

The Schools Budget of £259,158,600 having taken account of the views and formula proposals from the Schools Forum:

- i) That a Minimum Funding Guarantee of 0% for Wirral schools in 2018-19 is approved to provide additional protection and stability in funding, and to ensure that no school can lose pupil funding unless there is a reduction in pupil numbers.
- ii) That the continuing Contributions to Combined Budgets should be £875,600 in 2018-19.
- iii) That any remaining uncommitted Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) reserves remaining at the end of 2017-18 are used as a contingency to support High Needs pressures in future years.
- iv) There should there be a 0.5% top slice from the Schools Budget to support the outcome of the High Needs review.
- v) That the schools funding formula should be a transition formula introducing some elements of the National Funding Formula.
- vi) Headroom should be allocated evenly over all formula elements.
- vii) PFI within the schools funding formula should be increased in line with the contract inflation provision.
- viii) The unit value of the Looked After Children (LAC) element within the funding formula is reduced to take account of the increase in LAC Pupil Premium.
- ix) The following place changes are agreed from September 2018:
  - Birkenhead 6th Form College reduce by 8 places to 57
  - Wirral Met College to increase by 2 places to 119
- x) The base rate element of the Early Years funding formula is increased to pass an extra 2% of grant funding on to providers.
- xi) The SEN Support is redesigned including a traded service for some Hearing and Vision support in schools.

xii) The Early Years funding formula is retained in its current format.

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 2018/19 and that :

a) For Wirral Council Services the Council Tax be increased by 5.99% for 2018/19 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 18 December 2017 calculated the Council Tax Base 2018/19 for the whole of the properties in its area as 92,255.9 for 2018/19 (Item T in the statutory formula).

That the following amounts be calculated and approved by the Council for the year 2018/19 in accordance with Sections 32-36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended) ("the Act");

a) £136,464,000 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act (amended) as the Council Tax Requirement for 2018/19 (item R in the statutory formula). This amount (D) is determined as being the difference between:

i) £844,568,000 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) £708,104,000 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) £1,479.19 being the amount calculated in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act (amended) as the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2018/19. 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**

2018/19

A	B	C	D
£986.13	£1,150.48	£1,314.84	£1,479.19
E	F	G	H
£1,807.89	£2,136.60	£2,465.32	£2,958.38

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 2018/19 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 6% or above for those authorities with Adult Social Care responsibilities.

**Wirral – Basic Amount of Council Tax Comparison for Referendum**

2018/19

	2017/18	2018/19	Change	Change
	£	£	£	%
Band D	1,395.59	1,479.19	83.60	5.99

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. This will be as indicated in the tables which when received will be included in updated tables to Council.

**Police and Crime Commissioner for Merseyside (figures awaited)**

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

**Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (figures awaited)**

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

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 (awaiting figures for Police and Fire)**

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H

## WIRRAL COUNCIL REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

<b>Forecast Income</b>	<b>Budget 2018/19</b>
<b>Council Tax</b>	127.43
- Housing	1.10
- Increase 2.99%	4.00
- Adult Social Care Precept of 3%	3.90
<b>Business Rates</b>	126.24
- Loss of Business Rates Top Up (Due to RSG rolled in)	-7.00
- Improved Better Care Fund Rolled in	12.00
- Business Rates Base increase	4.20
- Business Rates Inflation	1.00
<b>New Homes Bonus</b>	1.56
<b>Capital Receipts to fund another year of transformation</b>	10.00
<b>One-off use of Balances, Reserves &amp; Collection Fund</b>	16.08
<b>Total Funding</b>	300.52

<b>Forecast Operating Structure Expenditure</b>	<b>Budget 2018/19</b>
Business Services	77.01
Corporate Resources & Reform	1.52
Strategy and Partnerships	58.60
Children's Services	84.63
Adult Social Care	78.76
<b>Total Forecast Expenditure</b>	300.52

<b>Forecast Theme/Portfolio Expenditure</b>		<b>Budget 2018/19</b>
<b>People</b>	Adult Social Care and Health	89.76
	Children & Families	92.80
<b>Environment</b>	Environment	46.20
	Housing and Community Safety	22.12
	Localism and Engagement	1.20
<b>Business</b>	Finance and Income Generation	8.06
	Highways and Transport	33.01
	Leadership	2.18
	Transformation	5.19
<b>Total Forecast Expenditure</b>		300.52

