

CONSERVATIVE GROUP REPORT - FINANCIAL OPTIONS TO SAVE WASH COMMON LIBRARY:

Purpose of Report: This report sets out options for saving Wash Common Library

Recommendation:

- 1) The Council agrees to reopen Wash Common Library immediately
- 2) The Council agrees to reinstate the £22,000 in the revenue budget needed to run Wash Common Library
- 3) The Council will meet this cost by allocating the saving of £13,500 from an underspend on members' pensions for 2004/5 and by adopting option 2.1 below to save a further £8,500.

Supporting Information:

1 Members' Pensions

- 1.1 The original working budget for take up by 52 members was £37k – on average £711.53 per member, however the 2004/5 budget was reduced to £30k on the assumption that not all members would take up the opportunity of a pension (£30k assumes a take up of approximately 42 members).
- 1.2 The actual rate of take up at the last count was 22 members at an annual cost of £16.5k. Members retain the right to join the scheme at a later date, which may increase the cost in future.
- 1.3 This means that for 2004/5 an unexpected saving of £13.5k is available to be allocated towards Wash Common Library.

2 Options to save the remaining £8,500

- 2.1 **Reduce the Increase in the Corporate Development budget from £100k to £91.5k.** Council on 1st March approved £100k extra spending on "corporate development", increasing the overall budget for corporate training from £34k to £134. This option proposes increasing the budget to £125.5k instead.
- 2.2 **Increase the Managed Vacancy Factor from £0.275m to £0.2835m:** In the budget papers presented to Full Council on 1st March the Council's budget made provision for an extra MVF of £0.275m in the four directorates: £160k in Community Care and Housing, £25k in strategy & Commissioning, £60k in Environment & Public Protection, and £30k in Children & Young People. This option proposes increasing the extra MVF across the Council from £0.275m to £0.2835m, the extra saving of £8.5k to be split across the four directorates.
- 2.3 **Reduce the extra spending of £10k on the Members' Development Programme to £1.5k.** An extra allocation of £10k was made at the budget setting Council for Member development. This option instead proposes an increase of £1.5k in this area, so that the 2003/4 budget of £422k for Members only increases to £502.5k rather than the £511k previously agreed by Council.

- 2.4 Reduce Spending on Outside Consultants by £8.5k.** The Council's spend on outside consultants for the last year in which figures are available (2002/3) was £918k. This option requires officers to identify reductions in the budget for outside consultants in 2004/5 by £8.5k (or approximately 1% of the estimated annual spend).
- 2.5 Reduce the Council's contribution to the resident's magazine from £19.3k to £10.8k a year.** The Council's currently contributes £19.3k pa towards the total budget of £41k for 'West Berkshire News'. Reducing the budget by £8.5k would entail issuing 'West Berkshire News' every 4 months instead of every 3 months.
- 2.6 Identify Income Opportunities of £8.5k from Further Sponsorship of Council Assets:** The Council has already agreed to generate income from the sponsorship of Roundabouts. Under this option officers would be asked to generate further income from sponsorship of Council assets – e.g. the outside of Wash Common Library container, advertising in Council Car Parks, sponsorship of West Berkshire mobile vehicles.
- 2.7 Save £30k by reducing the number of Planning Committees from four to two:** This move would generate a saving of approximately £30k and make good sense for the efficiency of the planning process.
- 2.8 Reduce spending on Member Refreshments by £3.5k and recover extra budget allocation for additional Area forums (£5k pa).** The overall budget for member refreshments is £5.5k.