

COUNCIL – 2 NOVEMBER 2009

MOTIONS

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1) and are listed in the order received. The actual order in which they are debated will be determined by the party groups in accordance with Standing Order 5(3).

(1) COUNCIL EXECUTIVE PAY

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook

Seconded by Councillor Tom Harney

Council recognises the public concern being expressed over the level of senior officer pay within the public sector.

Council notes the recent comments from all three political parties:

- Vince Cable has proposed zero growth overall for public sector pay (saving £2.4 billion a year), and a 25 per cent reduction in the total pay bill of staff earning over £100,000
- George Osborne has promised to freeze the pay of 4 million public sector workers earning more than £18,000 a year to save an estimated £3.2bn a year from 2011
- The Communities Secretary, John Denham has said, although the government could not freeze the pay of local authority bosses like it had done for judges and NHS chiefs that the time has come for ruling parties on UK councils to prove that every penny of their spending is justified. "There's precious little evidence that changing your executive actually improves the performance of your local authority... I am setting some pretty clear mood music about the demand for value for money we would expect to see"

The chief executive of the Local Government Association, John Ransford, (April 2009) argues high salaries are needed to encourage the most talented people to work in the public sector, but warned town halls that pay deals need to be reasonable. He said "Councils need talented people in top management positions but they have to balance this with the need, in a tight financial situation, for all salaries to be demonstrably reasonable."

In light of these concerns, Council believes that greater transparency and clarity is needed to ensure that senior officers' salaries are in proportion to their responsibilities and their level of performance.

Therefore, Council instructs the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to bring forward proposals for amendments to the Council's Constitution which would establish, as a responsibility of the Employment and Appointments Committee, powers analogous to that of non executive directors in private companies, specifically:

- Policy on senior officer pay (Chief Officers and Heads of Service), having regard to job evaluation, equal pay and other relevant HR policies of the Council
- The establishment, maintenance and supervision of a performance framework for Chief Officers and Heads of Service
- The carrying out (alongside the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council) of Chief Executive appraisals

(2) 20MPH ZONES AROUND SCHOOLS

Proposed by Councillor Jean Quinn

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council is pleased to note:

1. The significant progress being made in improving safety on Wirral's roads, in particular the early achievement of the Government's national 2010 target for reducing the number of serious accident casualties involving children.
2. The success of our "Accidents Two Zero" initiative involving the introduction of advisory 20mph signs in residential areas which has now progressed onto a third tranche of sites across the Borough.

Council believes that improving safety on Wirral's roads, particularly for vulnerable road users such as children and adult pedestrians and cyclists should continue be a top priority.

Council notes that the Department for Transport guidance on setting local speed limits highlights that local authorities can consider introducing 20mph speed limits, variable 20mph speed limits and 20mph zones in residential areas and around schools if they believe it appropriate to do so.

Council therefore requests the Director of Technical Services to review speed limits around Wirral schools and, in partnership with Merseyside Police, examine the feasibility of introducing either permanent or variable "time specific" 20 mph restrictions as appropriate.

(3) QUANGOS

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

This Council welcomes the launch of the Local Government Association document '*Who's in charge? Putting power in local hands*' in July 2009.

In particular, Council welcomes the vision set out therein;

- a. that quangos should carry out their functions 'as efficiently as possible'

- b. that decisions about public services should be taken by 'locally elected representatives' and not by 'unelected boards'
- c. that 'openness' should be the key feature

Council recognises the balanced approach being adopted by the LGA in its 'report card' approach, seeking evidence of good practice and establishing where these bodies are working well with councils, through developing effective scrutiny. In so doing, this Council points to the effective arrangements and practices emerging locally since the National Health Service Act 2006 and looks forward to the results of the report card approach.

Council also notes that the consultation paper '*Strengthening Local Democracy*' issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in July writes of 'a strong, revitalised local democracy' and makes it clear (para 150) that the Government;

'want to ensure that existing and planned mechanisms for joint working between authorities at the sub regional or city regional level are as accessible, transparent and accountable as possible.'

Council believes that it is essential that, in this new period of restraint and austerity requiring tight control of public expenditure, the growth of quangos and their existence should be challenged to determine whether they are needed, efficient or where reform could improve their performance.

Council believes that resources must be directed to 'front line' services rather than structures and organisations.

Council therefore welcomes the approach being adopted by the Local Government Association in their detailed study and resolves to provide such advice and assistance to the LGA as required with the aim of securing more efficient use of funds and cutting out overlapping bureaucracy and duplicated programmes.

Council also requests that Overview and Scrutiny Committees, as appropriate and as part of their work plans, look to identify best practice partnership working arrangements with quangos and identify opportunities for quango organisations to contribute further to enhancing partnership working in Wirral.

(4) THE WIRRAL APPRENTICE

Proposed by Councillor Jean Stapleton

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

Council welcomes the innovative new programme launched recently to create one hundred new apprentice positions in local companies, with Wirral Council paying their salaries for the next 18 months and the National Apprenticeship Service paying for their training.

Council notes that this is a key element of the authority's pro-active strategy aimed at tackling the impact of the global recession.

Council congratulates all the officers who have worked hard to get this excellent scheme off the ground.

(5) NATIONAL TRAINING AWARD

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies

Seconded by Councillor Chris Meaden

Council is delighted to note that Wirral has recently been awarded a National Training Award from UK Skills for training in Courtroom Skills, provided by the Children and Young People's Department in association with a private training provider.

Officers from a number of services, including social care, human resources, and licensing, have benefitted from these courses which are designed to make them as effective as possible when they have to appear in court as part of their duties.

The training has also proved very useful for 6th Form students who have been offered the chance to participate as part of their 'A' level studies.

Council wishes to congratulate all staff involved in providing this training, and in particular recognises the work of Norma Gordon who has played a key role in the planning and organisation of these courses over several years.

(6) ADULT SOCIAL CARE - PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Proposed by Councillor Mountney

Seconded by Councillor Watt

(1) This Council recognises that a number of concerns were raised by a Council 'whistleblower' in October 2007 under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, which in turn has resulted in the Audit Commission issuing Wirral Council with a Public Information Disclosure report.

(2) Council notes the findings of the report:

- Although 30 accredited providers are used by the Council only 12 contracts have been signed and returned by providers.
- No formal arrangements have been established for the contract monitoring of supported living providers.
- There are no arrangements at present for feedback from service users where there is dissatisfaction with services or where quality standards have not been met.
- There remains a substantial risk that users receiving services from one of the Councils service providers are being charged unfairly.
- The Council does not always know the actual contributions that the provider requires service users to contribute for services they provide. Consequently the Council is not in a position to know whether the aggregate of charges levied on service users by the Council and contributions required by the provider are in compliance with the guidance of fairer charging. It is not clear who is currently ensuring that these service users are receiving adequate protection for the risk

of financial abuse.

(3) Council notes the fact that these findings had previously been raised with officers of the Council by the whistleblower and, whilst thanking the Audit Commission for the production of this report and bringing the matter out into the open, condemns the fact that the Council's own procedures are so defective as to have needed the Audit Commission's intervention to bring them to the notice of the Council and the public.

(4) Council believes that this PIDA report and the Department's unwillingness to bring to the Council's attention the whistleblower's concerns regarding the treatment of those in our care demonstrates a lack of effective governance, management and leadership within the Department.

(5) Therefore this Council instructs the Chief Executive to appoint an independent person of sufficient standing and experience to investigate these matters fully, speedily and rigorously and to bring their findings to the Council's attention, including any disciplinary action, if required, at the earliest possible occasion.

(7) FINANCES

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

This Council notes the recent campaign by the Taxpayers Alliance and George Osborne MP to provide greater disclosure to the public of what their money is being spent on.

Council believes the publication of all Council items of revenue and capital expenditure of £10,000 and above will increase transparency and therefore accountability.

Council resolves, as a first step, to instruct the Director of Finance make any Council expenditures of £10,000 and above available to the public online within three months of the transaction.

(8) OPPOSITION TO AIR PASSENGER DUTY (APD)

Proposed by Councillor Denis Knowles

Seconded by Councillor Tom Anderson

The Council notes this Government's plans to introduce and increase the cost of a new banding system for air passenger duty in 2010 but believes that any duty should be based on the level of carbon emissions produced by flights, rather than arbitrary zones based on the location of a country's capital city but agrees that actual distance travelled is a good approximation for estimating carbon emissions.

The council believes that replacing the air passenger duty with a per plane tax would be fairer for passengers flying on busy routes; and calls on the Government to abolish the air passenger duty and replace it with a per plane aviation duty based on the actual distance travelled.

The Council therefore requests that the Chief Executive writes to the appropriate Government department expressing the councils' views as soon as possible.

(9) COUNCIL HALLS AND COMMUNITY CENTRES

Proposed by Councillor Gerry Ellis

Seconded by Councillor Sheila Clarke

Council recognises the excellent work conducted and the value placed on Wirral's Community Centres and Halls by local residents.

Council notes the current policy of closing any hall or community centre that has not been transferred out of Council ownership by January 2011, is causing concern and distress to users, residents and those charged with discussing these matters with Council Officers.

Council is particularly disturbed at the concerns expressed by JMC's about the level of engagement by officers in the process, the delay in receiving full structural surveys, the quality of surveys conducted and the lack of clarity and criteria about any 'dowry' to be received.

Council believes that in the light of the recent policy U turn on the SAR characterised as 'decisive leadership' by the administration, the current policy on Halls and Community Centres should be amended to:

Remove the threat that any Hall or Community Centre not transferred by January 2011 will be closed.

Ensure Council Officers provide the level of support required to assist those JMC's who have indicated their ability and willingness to work towards asset transfer

Ensure accurate full structural surveys are carried out as a matter of urgency at all Halls and Community Centres currently in the Council's ownership and prior to any transfers

(10) FREE ACCESS TO LEISURE FACILITIES FOR SERVICEMEN AND DIRECT DEPENDENTS

Proposed by Councillor J Green

Seconded by Councillor L Rennie

At this time of remembrance and in an effort to offer a tangible symbol of our eternal gratitude to those service men and woman who are presently fighting with great

courage for this nation. Council, as a demonstration of the appreciation of the people of Wirral, instructs Officers to make provision for granting serving and reserve forces and their direct dependants who reside in, or who visit, Metropolitan Borough of Wirral free access to our leisure facilities.

This page is intentionally left blank