

COUNCIL

Monday, 15 December 2014

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Steve Foulkes) in the Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Les Rowlands)

Councillors	RL Abbey	P Hackett	D Realey
	T Anderson	J Hale	L Reecejones
	B Berry	P Hayes	L Rennie
	C Blakeley	A Hodson	D Roberts
	E Boulton	K Hodson	J Salter
	A Brighthouse	M Hornby	H Smith
	P Brightmore	T Johnson	Tony Smith
	C Carubia	AER Jones	W Smith
	P Cleary	C Jones	C Spriggs
	W Clements	S Kelly	J Stapleton
	J Crabtree	A Leech	M Sullivan
	M Daniel	AR McLachlan	A Sykes
	G Davies	M McLaughlin	J Walsh
	P Davies	C Meaden	G Watt
	WJ Davies	D Mitchell	S Whittingham
	P Doughty	B Mooney	J Williamson
	D Elderton	C Muspratt	I Williams
	G Ellis	S Niblock	KJ Williams
	P Gilchrist	T Norbury	S Williams
	JE Green	M Patrick	
	R Gregson	T Pilgrim	

Apologies Councillors C Povall P Williams

87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

No such declarations were made.

88 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor noted that apologies were received from Councillors Cherry Povall and Mrs PM Williams.

At the invitation of the Civic Mayor, Councillor Norbury addressed the Council on the success of the Authority in gaining the Members Development Charter, Level 1 from the North West Employers' Organisation and presented the certificate and award to the Council.

The Mayor congratulated everyone involved at the Floral Pavilion in achieving the Gold Award from the nationally recognised Green Tourism Business Scheme.

89 **PETITIONS**

A. In accordance with Standing Order 21, the Mayor received petitions submitted by –

Councillor Treena Johnson on behalf of 522 signatories and 128 online signatories requesting the Council to keep the Moreton Youth Club open.

Councillor Gerry Ellis on behalf of 514 signatories requesting 60 minute parking restrictions in Acacia Grove, West Kirby.

Resolved – That the petitions be noted and referred to the appropriate Chief Officer in accordance with Standing Order 34.

B. In accordance with the Petition Scheme (when petitions with a threshold of 3000 signatures triggered a Council debate) the Council received a petition of some 4042 signatures submitted by Sue Kellett of UNISON, asking the Council to stop dismantling Council services and making even more job cuts.

Phil Goodwin, Branch Secretary of UNISON addressed the Council on behalf of the petitioners.

Following a debate, it was moved by Councillor Phil Davies, duly seconded and –

Resolved – That Phil Goodwin be thanked for his compelling presentation and that the petition and its contents be noted.

The Mayor announced that in respect of the second petition received with regards to Wirral Sailing Centre the lead petitioner had withdrawn the petition so it would not be debated.

90 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Mr J Brace, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted a question on the four week consultation period over the closure of Lyndale School.

Councillor Tony Smith (Cabinet Member – Children and Family Services) responded accordingly.

In accordance with Standing Order 10, Mr Brace asked a supplementary question and Councillor Smith replied that he would respond in writing.

91 **LEADER'S, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' AND CHAIRS REPORTS**

Reports from the Leader, Cabinet Member and Chairs were considered at the Council meeting on 8 December so no reports were provided for this Council meeting.

92 **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL**

In accordance with Standing Order 5(2), six matters were submitted for approval by the Council (see minutes 93 and 95 to 99 post).

93 **COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION FINDINGS**

The first matter requiring approval related to budget options and Council Budget Consultation Findings and the recommendations from minute 106, Cabinet of 9 December, 2014.

It was moved by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan –

“That the recommendations contained within Cabinet minute 106 of 9 December, 2014 be approved.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Gilchrist and seconded by Councillor Brighthouse, that –

“Council notes the lengthy resolution presented by the Cabinet and recognises that it was overtaken, within twenty four hours, by warnings from Ed Balls, as Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, that there would be cuts in spending.

The resolution has to be considered in the context of the need for a frank and genuine debate about the scale and pace of deficit reduction, set out by all parties, with a belated recognition by Ed Miliband of the need to tackle the deficit.

It should be pointed out, however, that the Local Government Association has been successful in making the case for local services.

The Cabinet's claims and assertions about the Government also need to be placed in context. The last Labour manifesto repeatedly referred to the tough choices that would have been made.

Nevertheless, the following constructive comments are offered on the Cabinet resolution in the run up to the budget making period:

1. The savings removed from the Chief Executive's proposals, recognising public disquiet, should be welcomed.
2. Despite the fact that, during two consultation processes, our citizens have expressed clear views about certain services, proposals continue to be included in successive years (e.g. school crossing patrols, grit bins and parking charges for Country Parks). This needs to be resolved and the Cabinet should ensure these do not appear in future consultations.
3. The proposed reduction in the hours available at community libraries, down to 18, is so great that it should be rejected. There has been no public consultation in the communities being affected by the proposal. It is substantially less than the hours given detailed consideration at the Transformation and Resources P & P Committee.
4. The proposals to close satellite youth centres have been dropped, along with the reduction of a further night at the hubs. However, doubts were expressed about the impact of the proposed Youth Zone on the financing of the youth service. Concerns have also been raised about the impact of the Zone on youth services in the area. The project should be re-evaluated in the light of these issues.

The Council has, at last, secured the return of £6.7 million of Wirral taxpayers' money from the Merseyside Waste and Recycling Authority. This money has been returned with too many strings attached. To overcome this, officers are requested to work with all Merseyside Authorities and the Waste Authority to enable this funding to be successfully utilised.

The Council further notes the potential for substantial receipts from the sale of land and assets in the next twelve months and the coming years. The projected capital receipts position for 2015/16 is £15,500,000. Council notes the proposed reduction in preventative maintenance of £370,000.

Council believes that the infrastructure of parks and highways requires further investment and a further £2 million should be included in the capital programme to deliver these improvements. Officers are requested to draw up proposals so that investment in the parks takes around 25% of the funding and the remainder is directed to the highways infrastructure. This would augment the Integrated Transport Budget funding received from the Government.

Wirral needs to make more progress with the introduction of 20mph zones and other schemes to improve the health of local people by increasing walking and cycling.

Building on the integration of the Council and Public Health services, the opportunity should be taken to improve the health and wellbeing of residents through the use of Public Health funding to support walking and cycling projects.

As the cost of larger highway safety schemes is beyond the funding presently allocated to Constituency Committees, these Committees should have more resources, responsibilities and the freedom to develop local decision-making and priorities.

To secure additional and continuing resources for the future, the Council has to give a greater priority to the generation of additional and sustainable income. This includes development opportunities that should bring in additional business rates and new house-building that will increase Council Tax receipts.

As Wirral is now, at last, making progress on office accommodation, agile working and securing the efficiencies from re-organisations, the Council is better placed to respond to, and make representations to, the Government on the resources required for local services. Arrangements should, therefore, be made for the Council to respond to the impending Local Government Finance Settlement and any future consultations.

The Cabinet, therefore, is requested to revisit its spending proposals in the light of these considerations prior to finalising the Budget in February.”

Following a debate and Councillor Phil Davies having replied, the amendment proposed by Councillor Gilchrist was put and lost (24:38) (One abstention).

The motion was put and carried (37:25) (One abstention).

Resolved (37:25) (One abstention) - That the recommendations contained within Cabinet minute 106 of 9 December, 2014 be approved.

94 **PROCEDURE**

On a motion by Councillor Bill Davies duly seconded, it was –

Resolved (56:6) (One abstention) – That Standing Order 9 be applied at 8.00pm.

95 **COUNCIL TAX 2015/16**

The second matter requiring approval related to Council Tax and the recommendations from minute 108, Cabinet of 9 December, 2014.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan, it was –

Resolved (61:0) (Two abstentions) - That the recommendations contained within Cabinet minute 108 of 9 December, 2014, be approved.

96 **BUDGET COUNCIL AGENDA AND PROCEDURE**

The third matter requiring approval related to the agenda and procedure for the Budget Council meeting and recommendations from minute 109, Cabinet of 9 December, 2014.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan, it was –

Resolved (61:1) (One abstention) - That the recommendations contained within Cabinet minute 109 of 9 December, 2014, be approved.

97 **AMENDMENT TO THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2014-15**

The fourth matter requiring approval related to an amendment to the Treasury and Investment Strategy and the recommendation from minute 112, Cabinet of 9 December, 2014.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan, it was –

Resolved (43:19) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within Cabinet minute 112 of 9 December, 2014, be approved.

98 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 (MONTH 7) - CAPITAL**

The fifth matter requiring approval related to variances to the capital programme and the recommendations from minute 111, Cabinet of 9 December, 2014.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan, it was –

Resolved (62:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendations contained within Cabinet minute 111 of 9 December, 2014, be approved.

99 **SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP**

The sixth matter requiring approval related to a delegated decision taken by the Deputy Leader of the Council and the recommendations within that decision relating to the proposed re-establishment of the Safeguarding Reference Group.

On a motion by Councillor Ann McLachlan, seconded by Councillor Phil Davies, it was –

Resolved (62:0 (One abstention) - That the recommendations of the Deputy Leader of the Council be approved.

100 **MATTERS FOR NOTING**

There were no matters were submitted for noting.

101 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were no Members' general questions.

102 **MATTERS REFERRED FROM POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEES**

There were no matters referred from Policy and Performance Committees.

103 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Notices of Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(1) were reported to the Council. The Mayor, having considered each Motion, in accordance with Standing Order 7(4) had decided that the Motions would be dealt with as follows –

- (i) Consultation that Counts – to be referred to the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee
- (ii) Government Economic Policies Working for Wirral - to be debated

Resolved – That the Notice of Motion, 'Consultation that Counts', be referred to the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee.

104 **MOTION - GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICIES WORKING FOR WIRRAL**

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council notes that since 2010, the Conservative-led Government has been working to a long-term economic plan to turn Britain around.

Council further notes that when Labour left Government there was a record peacetime deficit, increased unemployment and a welfare system that didn't reward work – they had even doubled income tax on the poorest by abolishing the 10p tax band.

Council acknowledges that the Government's economic policies have delivered the following achievements:

- The deficit cut by over a third
- Income tax cut for over 25 million people
- Benefits capped to reward work
- 1.8 million more people in employment
- The state pension increased by £800
- More children in good and outstanding schools
- 50,000 families with a home thanks to Help to Buy

Council further acknowledges that we are now seeing the tangible benefits of these Government policies working for Wirral people including:

- Wirral having the lowest rate of Job Seekers Allowance Claimants in the Liverpool City Region at 2.0% (October 2014), the lowest rate since December 2004.
- 2,600 people in Wirral coming off JSA since October 2013 and earning a wage for themselves and their families.
- Nearly £10 million of Regional Growth Fund monies being allocated to Wirral which has led to the safeguarding or creation of in excess of 1500 jobs.
- Building work commencing within the Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone on Wirral Metropolitan College's Built Environment Skills and Enterprise Centre, Tower Road South.
- Over £2 million of additional Regional Growth Fund resources secured ensuring the development of 120,000 sq ft of floor space along the A41 corridor.

Council is therefore dismayed that the Labour Administration continues to deny the significant economic benefits delivered to Wirral people from the Coalition Government's economic policies.

Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister congratulating him on these achievements.

Councillor Green spoke to the motion, followed by Councillor Lesley Rennie, and then having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9 (see minute 94 ante), the Council did not debate this matter.

The motion was then put and lost (24:38) (One abstention).

105 **VACANCIES**

Following on from the re-establishment of the Safeguarding Reference Group (see minute 99 ante) the Council was requested to appoint named deputies for the Reference Group.

Resolved – That the political groups be requested to supply names of deputies to the Head of Legal and Member Services.

106 **GRAHAM BURGESS**

The Mayor informed the Council that this would be the Chief Executive's last meeting before his retirement from the Council and thanked him for his service over the last two and a half years.

The Leader of the Council expressed his thanks to Mr Burgess for all his work in improving the Council, Wirral was now regularly cited as a good example of sector led improvement. Wirral had been shortlisted for a number of Local Government Chronicle awards and at City Region level was leading the debate about greater devolution.

Councillor Green added his thanks and stated that Mr Burgess had played his part in starting to move the Council to a different place.

Councillor Gilchrist added his thanks and said that Mr Burgess had been instrumental in changing the culture of the Council.

Mr Burgess thanked the Mayor and the Leaders for their kind words and said that the Council was now in a good and stable position.