

Council – 14 July 2014

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 7(1) and are listed in the order received.

1. BECOMING A 'DEMENTIA FRIENDLY' COUNCIL

Proposed by Councillor Tom Anderson

Seconded by Councillor Tracey Smith

Council:

1. Recognises that dementia is becoming a serious issue in society and is alarmed that one in three people over 65 will be diagnosed with dementia.
2. Applauds the great work that the Alzheimer's Society is doing in aiming to get 1 million people trained as a 'Dementia Friend' by the end of the year.
3. Notes Dementia Friends is a national programme that takes a maximum of 1 hour educating people on dementia and its effects.

Council believes that this is a worthy programme and the Council can play its part.

Therefore Council requests the Chief Executive to:

- a. Encourage Council staff to become Dementia Friends (and to undertake relevant training as soon as practicably possible).
- b. Write to the Alzheimer's Society requesting advice on how best to assist them in rolling out training across Wirral.
- c. Allow for Council property, where suitable, feasible and within reason, to be used free of charge by those delivering Dementia Friends Training.
- d. Encourage all Elected Members to become a 'Dementia Friend'.
- e. Invite key Council staff members to become 'Dementia Friend Champions' thereby enabling the roll out of Dementia Friends Training referred to.

2. THE LYNDALE SCHOOL

Proposed by Councillor Paul Hayes

Seconded by Councillor Jeff Green

Council, having regard to the support given to the campaign to keep the Lyndale School open by the public of Wirral, resolves that:

1. It is the firm belief of Council that the Lyndale School should remain open, and in order to bring to an end the anguish and uncertainty suffered by pupils and their parents and carers, calls upon Cabinet to confirm that the school will remain open when Cabinet next meets.
2. Council recognises the unique and caring environment provided by the Lyndale School to children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Council acknowledges the value of this provision and affirms its belief that such provision should remain at the Lyndale School.

3. Council instructs officers to work with the Wirral School's Forum in order to investigate how the funding of Wirral's Special Schools can more closely reflect the will of Wirral's residents, as expressed by the huge support given to the Lyndale School: that the quality and scale of provision for children requiring the services of special schools in Wirral should continually strive to improve and be in no way diminished.

3. UNDERGROUND COAL GASIFICATION

Proposed by Councillor Geoffrey Watt

Seconded by Councillor Gerry Ellis

- (1) Council recalls that at its meeting on 18th July 2011 it approved, with unanimous (all-party) support, a motion 'Shale Gas Fracking' (minute 28 refers) stating its opposition to shale gas or coal bed methane testing or extraction in Wirral until the Council was satisfied as to the safety of the process and the risk of adverse environmental impacts had been fully addressed.

See:

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/g3562/Printed%20minutes%2018th-Jul-2011%2018.15%20Council.pdf?T=1>

- (2) It has subsequently emerged that conditional licences to explore for underground coal gasification under parts of the Dee Estuary, including the Hilbre Islands and a coastal strip from Caldy to Hoylake have been granted to Cluff Natural Resources Ltd and for an area just off the entire North Wirral Coast to Riverside Energy Ltd.
- (3) Council notes that the Hilbre Islands are within the Dee Estuary Special Area of Conservation and Dee Estuary Special Protection Area (all part of a network of protected sites stretching across Europe called Natura 2000) and therefore covered by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations which also covers the Dee Estuary Ramsar Site. They are also protected through national legislation under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, as is the North Wirral Coast and the Mersey Narrows.
- (4) Council notes that operations both onshore and above the low water mark would require planning approval to be granted by this authority and also that the Hilbre Islands and much of the coastal strip are within its ownership and thus under its control.
- (5) Therefore, Council:
 - (a) Confirms its opposition to Unconventional Gas Extraction, including Underground Coal Gasification, Coal Bed Methane and Fracking, under Wirral, its offshore coastal waters and the Dee and Mersey estuaries until such time as the Council is satisfied as to the safety of the process and that the risk of adverse environmental impacts have been fully addressed.

(b) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change and to Wirral's four Members of Parliament, informing him and them of this decision.

(c) Instructs the Chief Executive to write to Wirral's neighbouring coastal local authorities (Sefton, Liverpool, Halton, Cheshire West & Chester, and Flintshire) informing them of this decision and inviting them to pass an equivalent resolution with the intention of protecting our shared environment.

4. PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR REFORM

Proposed by Councillor George Davies

Seconded by Councillor Matt Daniel

Council re-affirms its support for the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme proposed in the 2014/2015 Labour Group budget. It also welcomes the significant proposals put forward by the Labour Party in relation to preventing tenants being ripped-off by unscrupulous landlords and providing them with long term security they desperately need. More specifically:-

- The introduction of longer term three year tenancies
- The banning of letting agents fees to tenants, saving them on average £350
- Predictable rents with Landlords only allowed to review them once every year with an upper ceiling to prevent excessive rises.

5. A FAIR DEAL FOR WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan

Council notes that:

- (i). Sir Merrick Cockell, the outgoing chairman of the Local Government Association, has said increasing demands from a growing elderly population and cuts in council grants will lead to a funding gap of £5.8bn between March 2014 and March 2016 and a catastrophe in elderly care. The LGA predicts that by 2020 local authorities will have to spend 40% of their resources on elderly care. Council budgets have been cut by about 33% since 2010 as part of the austerity programme, including a £2.8bn reduction in social care funding.
- (ii). In Wirral, between 2014 and 2017 the gap between forecast expenditure and income is £45m which equates to a further 20% reduction in expenditure;
- (iii). Cuts of £70m are required between 2014/15 and 2017/18 to balance the books.
- (iv). By 2016 the government will have cut Wirral's grant by 57% (£127m);

- (v). The Council's budget is currently running a small under-spend, having been over-spent by £17m under the previous Administration;
- (vi). Whilst every effort has been made to minimise the impact of savings on front-line services, some of the budget reductions over the past two years have had negative impacts;
- (vii). Given the scale of the further savings required over the next three years it will become even more difficult to maintain good quality front-line services;
- (viii). The 'Future Council' programme will help to identify the core services which the Council should provide in the future. It will also help us to put in place new models to enable us to deliver more for less;

In light of the above, Council agrees to the following:

- (1) To reaffirm the principles on which we have based budgetary decisions, i.e. those with the broadest shoulders should bear the greatest burden; to minimise the impact on front-line services. Budget options should also enable us to meet our corporate priorities as far as possible, i.e. attracting jobs and investment; protecting the vulnerable; tackling inequalities;
- (2) To retain the relatively generous voluntary severance scheme for our staff as long as possible and to do everything possible to ensure that reductions in posts are achieved by voluntary means;
- (3) To help residents deal with the cost of living crisis, if the conditions surrounding the Council Tax Freeze Grant are maintained in 2015/16, then the Administration confirms its intention to freeze the Council Tax for a further year;
- (4) To continue to use every opportunity to lobby the government to reverse the damaging cuts to local government and, in particular, the unfair way in which Councils in the North of England have been forced to bear the brunt of the cuts. We will work with others to highlight this injustice and to campaign for a fair deal for Wirral from whichever party forms the government following next year's general election.

6. INVESTING IN WIRRAL'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council recognises that substantial capital receipts are likely to be received from asset sales over the next two years and that this has been reported as being in the order of £20 million.

Council believes that Wirral's roads, pavements and street lighting require further investment, over and above the programmes of recent years. Council welcomes the work being put in to target resources effectively and to utilise funds provided by the Government to cope with winter damage.

Council believes that the data from the annual condition survey should be reported upon in detail and that a strategic decision is desirable on a programme of sustained investment to improve the infrastructure in Wirral.

Council therefore requests that the Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee examine and report back on:

- (i). the level of investment in recent years
- (ii). the repairs backlog, including up to date UKPMS survey data
- (iii). the number of potholes, trip hazards and faulty street lighting issues being tackled
- (iv). a programme of investment that can be sustained over several years to deal with public concern about the state of Wirral's roads, pavements and lighting infrastructure.

7. THE BROWN BIN TAX AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council recalls that when the Labour administration brought in charges for garden waste collection, many residents objected, not only to the charge, but also to different charges being levied for those subscribing on-line and for those subscribing in other ways.

The garden waste service is the only chargeable service that operates such a differential.

Council notes that over 4,600 residents, without their own computers or access to one, were faced with having to pay out an extra £5. This continues to be regarded as deeply unfair to people who do not have Internet access.

Council therefore calls upon Cabinet to review the fairness of this different charging regime, in light of motions previously passed by Council on the issues of digital and financial exclusion, with a view to refunding the additional £5 paid by digitally excluded members of the community.