

COUNCIL – 13 July 2009

MATTERS FOR DEBATE

The Council is asked to consider the following motions , submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing order 8 (1), and objections and amendments submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2).

The order of business is as determined by the party groups in accordance with Standing Order 5(3) and the times for speeches by Standing Order 12(8) (all other speakers have 3 minutes).

1. CABINET’S FAILURE TO DEFEND THEIR DECISION AT LIBRARY INQUIRY

Proposed by Councillor Tom Anderson (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes (3 minutes)

Council condemns the Leader of the Council's failure to give oral evidence in front of the public at the Library Inquiry.

Council notes that not one Labour or Liberal Democrat Cabinet member chose to give public testimony at the Inquiry and denounces the Council’s Cabinet for hiding behind officers leading to a gross failure of transparency and accountability for the closure process and the decisions they have taken.

Council notes that the administration found it necessary to hire a barrister at Council Tax payer’s expense to defend the Cabinet’s decision and is concerned at the indicated costs.

This Council believes that the decision of the Labour/Liberal Democrat Cabinet not to defend their decision to close 11 Wirral Libraries in person at the Inquiry demonstrates contempt for the users of those libraries.

Council believes that the public of Wirral have lost confidence in the Leader of Wirral Borough Council and its Cabinet and therefore demands their immediate resignation.

2. COUNCIL FINANCE

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Simon Holbrook (3 minutes)

Council recognises the hard work of the last two years that has gone into creating a sustainable budget for this Council, in line with the Council’s Corporate Plan, with a projected gap for 2010/11 of just 5.5m, (assuming a 4% increase in Council Tax), which is much lower than projected gaps in previous years.

Council further recognises that this achievement has placed the Council in a much healthier position to face the consequences of the current global recession, which

will affect all local authorities in the coming years, as the next Comprehensive Spending Review takes account of the country's changed financial circumstances.

Council notes that Wirral's projected budget for 2011-14 takes the impact of the recession into account and currently shows a deficit of between £50m and £67m over the three years.

Council understands that, if Wirral residents are to continue to show the current high levels of satisfaction with the area in which they live, it will be essential to find new ways of providing the best possible services at the lowest possible costs and that these ways may be different from the way in which services have been traditionally delivered in the past.

Council therefore:

1. Asks all Chief Officers to prepare for the years ahead by doing everything in their power to find new, cost effective ways of delivering good services to the people of Wirral.
2. Calls on the Conservatives locally to explain, were they ever to achieve their stated ambition of running an administration, exactly how they will meet their financially reckless opposition promises, and the costs of their continued opposition to financially beneficial changes, without unscrupulously raiding reserves and balances and completely wrecking the Council's finances as they did the last time they had any power.
3. Calls on the Conservative members to explain exactly how they square their generous spending plans with the calls from their party nationally for a 10% cut in Council spending.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Cllr Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Cllr Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

Delete all and insert:

This Council notes the inconsistency between Wirral's Labour Group Leader, who has warned of cuts, and a Prime Minister who has insisted that spending will not be cut despite evidence in Treasury documents that there would be a 'reduction in medium-term spending'.

Further, this Council notes the Council Leader's implicit threats to cut services further. Council expresses disquiet that neither the Labour nor Liberal Democrats in Wirral have learnt anything from their catastrophic handling of the Strategic Asset Review.

Council resolves that any savings which are made at Wirral Council should be dedicated to preserving front line services and protecting Wirral's most vulnerable.

Council notes that the Conservatives in Wirral have, over the last decade, a consistent record of proposing below average council tax increases, including at the

last budget, and that it was the Conservatives who have fought hardest to protect front line services such as libraries, youth clubs and school crossing patrols under the current round of budget cuts.

3. DECLINE IN BEE POPULATION

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Niblock (3 minutes)

This Council shares the concerns expressed by the Women's Institute at its Annual General Meeting over the decline in the bee population and widespread concern about the decline of pollinators.

Council notes that the WI called on local authorities to plant verges, derelict land and public parks with bee friendly flowers.

In December 2008 Council recognised that the decline in vital contribution that bees make to pollination and to sustainable agriculture when it called for research and action to halt their decline.

Many of Wirral's management plans already recognise the need for sensitive management but that there is a pressing need to respond to the decline in the bee population.

Council requests, therefore, that Wirral's existing practices in managing open spaces and verges should be reviewed and updated to take account of this concern and brought back to the Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

As part of this process Council officers to consult with the local branches of the Women's Institute and other organisations to develop this initiative.

4. ID CARDS

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Cllr Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

This Council notes Her Majesty's Government's intention to push ahead with a National Identity Card and Database Scheme despite rising costs and continued opposition from many organisations, including a growing number of Local authorities.

This Council believes that such a scheme will be ineffective in the fight against crime, and that the vast amount of public money needed to execute the scheme would be better spent on more proven crime prevention measures, or paying down the excessive government debt.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Take part in no pilot scheme or feasibility work in relation to the introduction of national identity cards.
2. Assert that national identity cards will not be required to access any council services or benefits, unless required to do so by law.
3. Asks that the Chief Executive writes to the Home Secretary expressing this Council's opposition to the National Identity Card and Database Scheme.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny (3 minutes)

Delete all the existing text and replace with the following:

Council welcomes the recent announcement by the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, that ID Cards will be voluntary for British citizens; that these cards will become a single proof of identity replacing the multiplicity of forms of identity many people currently have to carry with them; to cap the cost of the cards at £30 per person for the first two years; and to pilot this scheme, again on a voluntary basis, in a small number of geographical areas from 2010.

5. EASY ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

Proposed by : Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by: Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Council notes that there is considerable public and press interest in the level of allowances being paid by taxpayers to members of public bodies.

Council further notes that Wirral Councillors have been frugal in their approach to allowances with an increase of just 1.9% in five years, that income tax and national insurance is paid on allowances and that Councillors on Wirral do not have access to a pension fund.

Although a lot of information is available in the public domain, Council believes that information on councillor allowances should be easily accessible to all those who wish to see it.

Council therefore requests the Chief Executive to place on the Council website a detailed list of all the allowances actually paid to individual Councillors, both by the Council and by those bodies funded from the Council Tax through a precept or levy.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook

Seconded by Councillor Bob Moon

Like all other Councils, Wirral Council has an Independent Remuneration Panel, which makes recommendations on the level of Councillors' Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances. However, Council notes that these arrangements do not extend to Fire, Police and Passenger Transport Authorities; and calls upon the Leaders of all the constituent Council's in Merseyside to support the appointment of a local Independent Remuneration Panel to take on this task.

6. KITCHEN WASTE COLLECTION TRIAL SCHEME

Proposed by Councillor Gill Gardiner (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Mike Redfern (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes that:

The Government has awarded Wirral a '3-star' rating for its environmental performance and has named Wirral as 'the most improved metropolitan borough' for recycling in 2007/08.

Wirral's recycling rates have soared from 14% in 2006/07 to 35% in 2008-09 and around 38% now, peaking at 43% last summer thanks to the garden waste collections.

With landfill taxes rising, this commitment to recycling will save Wirral council tax payers money and at the same time reduce our impact on climate change.

(2) Council welcomes the recent raising of the national recycling target to 55% by the Government.

(3) Council also notes that:

a) The Government is encouraging Local Authorities to collect food waste separately from other household waste and have commissioned a report to consider the implications of banning of kitchen waste from landfill.

b) Kitchen waste makes up approximately 18% of our household waste stream, and it has been estimated that the introduction of a kerbside collection of food waste across Wirral would divert between 6,500 and 9,500 tonnes of waste from landfill, increasing our recycling performance by around 7%.

c) That the treatment of kerbside collected food waste is being actively considered by Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority and that the planning stages of the treatment facility are being pursued.

(4) Council therefore proposes that in preparation for the time Merseyside Districts are required to make a decision as to whether food waste is separately collected, a study is carried out to establish the most effective methods for households to safely separate this waste and for its efficient kerbside collection.

(5) Council therefore resolves:

(a) to request officers present the details of a short term trial of the collection of food waste to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in September. The details of any trial options should include cost implications, timescales and coverage.

(b) that the findings of the trial are reported to the Scrutiny Committee in January with a detailed options report on the future of kitchen waste collections in Wirral.

7. EP ELECTIONS

Moved by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

Council regrets the election of a BNP Member of the European Parliament to represent Wirral, however Council further notes that the vote for the BNP rose by only a single ballot in Wirral and recognises that the Government's decision to introduce Proportional Representation for European elections in 1999 has enabled Nick Griffin to be elected a decade later.

Council fully rejects the racist policies of the BNP and calls upon the Chief Executive and all council officers to refuse to meet with Mr Griffin and his colleagues in the BNP (in any official capacity) and deny them access to information held by the Council or entry to council owned premises, unless to do so would be unlawful.

Council warmly congratulates Rt Hon Sir Robert Atkins, Sajjad Karim, Jaqueline Foster, Arlene McCarty, Brian Simpson, Paul Nutall and Chris Davies upon their election to the European Parliament and invites them to meet with Council officers and the leaders of the three main political parties in Wirral to discuss how best they can promote the interests of Wirral in the European Parliament.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

In para 1, put a full-stop after the words "single ballot in Wirral" and delete everything else in that paragraph. Keep the other two paragraphs as they are.

8. SUCCESS OF WIRRAL BUSINESSES

Proposed by Councillor Jean Stapleton (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan (3 minutes)

This Council congratulates those Wirral businesses who won awards or were shortlisted at the recent Liverpool Daily Post Regional Business Awards event.

In particular, Council congratulates Cammell Laird on winning the KPMG Business of the Year award for its continued growth after it secured major long term contracts for the whole life maintenance of some of its vessels, as well as being shortlisted to build flight (decks) for the Royal Navy's next generation of aircraft carriers.

Council notes that this success comes at the end of a lengthy period during which a Labour led Council kept faith with the shipbuilding industry and with Wirral's skilled workers, refusing to give up hope for its revival at a time when all current advice said shipbuilding on Wirral was finished, and encouraging all efforts to use the unique facilities available for shipping repair. Council welcomes the fact that this award shows the shipbuilding industry has also kept faith with the people of Wirral, building a thriving business and employing local people.

Council also welcomes the approach to inward investment on Wirral, which forms part of the Vision put forward by the Labour/Liberal Democrat administration, and recognises the success of the Bromborough based T-systems which created 40 new jobs last year at Wirral International Business Park and won the Liverpool Vision Investment of the Year Award.

Council is delighted that a Wirral painting and decorating firm, the Roy Hankinson Group, won the Royal Mail Green award for finding ways to recycle over 50,000 used paint tins.

Council believes that the success of Wirral's businesses is a tribute to all the hard work put in by Wirral workers and their employers and that the continuing partnership on Wirral between businesses and the Council which encourages inward investment and growth can only be to everyone's advantage.

9. LANDFILL IN WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Leah Fraser (3 minutes)

Council is disappointed to note that Merseyside Environmental Agency Services (MEAS) has moved to the next stage of investigations for landfill sites in Wirral, at Moreton and Prenton.

2. Council supports the views expressed of local residents, the Council, Wirral Wildlife and other interested stakeholders during the first stage of consultation, rejecting both sites

3. Council further notes that MEAS has republished their initial report, having omitted the responses from local residents, elected members and other agencies in the first version.

4. Council again urges MEAS to reject the use of the North Wirral Brickworks, Carr Lane Moreton (MIN027) and the site in Prenton (MIN030) and asks MEAS to remove, without delay, both of these sites from their proposals.

10. PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC GRADE 11* HANGARS ASSOCIATED WITH 610 SQUADRON OF THE ROYAL AUXILIARY AIR FORCE

Proposed by Councillor Jerry Williams (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Walter Smith (3 minutes)

This Council recognises the historic importance of the 610 (County of Chester) Squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and its close association with Wirral.

Council notes that the Squadron was formed at Hooton Park in 1936 and that the importance of Hooton Airfield goes back much further. Council also notes that, even with the boundary changes over the years, a large proportion of this historic airfield is still within Wirral Council's boundaries.

Council further recognises that the 610 squadron was to become one of the most famous Battle of Britain Squadrons flying from Biggin Hill and its forward base Hawkinge and that during the height of the battle in July and August 1940 many local pilots were killed and others had died before over Dunkirk. Many of those pilots had worked at Lever's, the Post Office, Bibby's and other Wirral firms and many of the indispensable and hardworking ground crew also came from the Wirral.

The most famous photograph of Spitfires in formation is that of 610 Squadron aircraft bearing their famous 'DW' markings in 1940. Even after the airfield's closure, 610 Squadron Association remained closely associated with the Grade II* Belfast hangars and fought hard to save them from demolition.

Wirral Council fully endorses the campaign to preserve the historic hangars on site as part of Britain's and Wirral's rich heritage, and wishes the 610 Squadron Association all the best for the future."

11. MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Proposed by Councillor Lesley Rennie (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Chris Blakeley (3 minutes)

This Council thanks Councillor John George for the loyal service he has given over many years as this Council's Labour representative on the Fire Authority, and expresses its belief that his presence and experience will be sorely missed.

This Council also thanks Councillor Denis Knowles for his invaluable contribution to the work of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ron Abbey (3 minutes)

At the end of the second paragraph add the following:

The Council also urges Councillor Knowles to do the honourable thing and resign his seat and stand for election to Seacombe ward as a Conservative Party member.