

MOTION: WIRRAL'S PUBLIC LIBRARY PROVISION

Proposed by Councillor Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie (3 minutes)

(1) Council condemns the Leader of the Council's unwillingness to allow any comment from members of the public or members of the Council at the meeting of the Cabinet on 1st October when he announced their administration's humiliating 'U turn' on Wirral's Public Library Provision.

(2) Council notes that we have still not received answers to the following:

Why when the Conservative Group spoke up for the people of Wirral and sought to have the administration's Library Closure Plan stopped at each opportunity afforded to all members of the Council (15th December 2008, 15th February 2009, 2nd March 2009, 27th April 2009 and the 15th July 2009) the Labour/Liberal Democrat administration failed to take these opportunities and instead continued to spend Wirral tax payers money (officer time, glossy leaflets, hiring a barrister, phoning around libraries to see what they offer to the public)?

Why did the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration before even launching this policy, or even when they chose to include Eastham and Woodchurch libraries, not conduct an equality impact assessment into its implications or seek to include library users in a meaningful and open consultation process?

Why, when they have had a copy of Sue Charteris' report for more than a month they have chosen not to share its emerging recommendations with the Council and Wirral public or even informed us of which 'facts' they have chosen to contest?

Why in their statements to the Cabinet and the press have they not accepted they were wrong or apologised to library staff or Wirral residents, some of whom are the most vulnerable and isolated in our communities, for the upset and heartache they have caused by pursuing their flagship policy of library closures?

(3) Council therefore believes that the current Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration cannot offer Wirral residents any believable assurance that they have the capacity to listen and learn or change their approach to one of listening and including Wirral people in the Council's decision making process.

(4) Council, while expressing its delight that our libraries will remain open have concluded that:

No change of Wirral's administration is not an option and that the current Labour/Liberal Democrat Cabinet, humiliated as it is by its own reversal of its defining policy, is clearly out of ideas, out of touch and should be out of office.

It has lost the trust and confidence of Wirral residents and must, at last, take the honourable course and resign.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Gilchrist (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Mrs P M Williams (3 minutes)

(1) Council believes that the Motion proposed by Councillor Green and seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie should be properly and fully considered as soon as the Secretary of State has considered the report of the Inquiry by Sue Charteris and published his decision.

(2) Council recognises that it is in the interests of local democracy for the fullest consideration to take place of the findings, through Cabinet reports, through Overview and Scrutiny and such further means as are considered necessary and desirable.

(3) Council believes that arrangements for the publication and dissemination of the Secretary of State's decision and the report by Sue Charteris should be made at the earliest opportunity in consultation with the DCMS.

(4) Council notes that the inquiry was run under the Public Libraries (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1992 and that these rules entitle people who appeared at the library inquiry to be notified of the Secretary of State's decision and to receive a copy of the report by Sue Charteris.

(5) However, Council believes that, given the considerable level of public interest in this matter and the need to ensure public confidence in the process the Secretary of State should publish the full report by Sue Charteris with the notification of his decision. Accordingly officers be requested to make representations to the DCMS to achieve this end.

(6) Council therefore resolves to refer the Motion proposed by Councillor Green and seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie to a future meeting of Council where it shall be further debated once Members have received the Secretary of State's decision and the full report by Sue Charteris.

(7) Council welcomes the decision of Cabinet contained in Minute 139 of 1st October 2009 which revoked paragraphs 7 to 19 (inclusive) of Minute 325 of 15 January 2009.

(8) Council fully recognises the distress and anxiety caused to Wirral's residents and library users throughout this period and apologises for this and the further inconvenience caused whilst the result of the Inquiry is awaited.

Right of reply: Councillor Green (7 minutes)