

Council – 19 October, 2020

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 13.1 and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2.

1. OVERCOMING COVID FAILURES TO BUILD THE 'TEST AND TRACING' SYSTEM WIRRAL NEEDS

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson

Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Council wishes for the success of any current government in tackling the current global pandemic.

Council places on record its thanks and appreciation of all those involved in the fight to contain and tackle the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

However, there are a number of failures that cannot be ignored by Council.

Local government is clearly an important player in the fight against the second wave.

However such government support that has been forthcoming by way of funding or access to national track and trace databases has only been secured in recent times and only after repeated requests to ensure local government is better equipped to help control the virus.

Council recognises that its officers have worked tirelessly to secure data from the national Test and Trace Service and to combine local and national data in the best interests of Wirral's people.

Council considers that the Government's determination to reorganise Public Health England in the midst of national and local work to be a diversion of energy and capacity that should be focussed on tackling the virus.

Notwithstanding this work, Council believes that the substantial sums awarded to the contractors by the Government are not, to date, providing value for money in the fight against the virus. There remains considerable public suspicion about the role of contractors that have and are being used, a clear need for greater transparency in the way contractors have been appointed and are operating, leading to growing concern that a system intended to secure public confidence has failed to do so.

Council recognises that further introductions of local lockdowns have become necessary, but only because previous attempts by the government to control the virus have failed.

Council believes that the transfer of Test and Trace funding to this and other local authorities, taking full advantage of local knowledge and contacts, would produce

greater public trust in the system than can be secured under the arrangements that have been made.

Council believes that the way to improve this is to give funding to council for the extra costs and loss of income it is experiencing, and to give us the powers, support and capacity to conduct locally run testing, tracking and tracing.

Council recommends this be communicated by Group Leaders in the strongest possible way to ministers.

Council further requests that Wirral's MPs take up this issue and that Wirral Council works with the Local Government Association to secure improvements to the system.

2. PROTECTING THE PUBLIC'S SAY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes the recent Government consultations concerning the operation of the Planning system.

Council notes the response made on 1st October to the first consultation '**Changes to the current planning system**' and, in particular, welcomes the Council's response challenging the proposed change to the housing need algorithm which will place additional pressure on the Brownfield First strategy and the change to the small sites threshold for affordable housing which will impact on our ability to secure affordable housing.

Council calls on Government to abandon these proposals.

Council further notes the ongoing consultation on the Government White Paper, '**Planning for the Future**', which set out proposals on reforms to the planning system; In particular, Council is concerned that the proposals seek to reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications near them with developers instead being granted automatic rights to build on land identified as 'for growth'.

Council notes that the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by Local Authority Planning Committees, with permission granted to around nine out of 10 applications and that research by the Local Government Association has indicated that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started.

The Royal Institute for British Architects say *"these shameful proposals do almost nothing to guarantee the delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes. While they might help to 'get Britain building' – paired with the extension of Permitted Development – there's every chance they could also lead to the creation of the next generation of slum housing. The housing crisis isn't just about numbers, and deregulation won't solve it."*

<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landing-page/deregulation-wont-solve-the-housing-crisis-riba-criticises-jenricks-planning-reforms>

The Town and Country Planning Association say *“The complex proposals in the white paper will move permission to the plan making stage reducing democratic oversight and streamlining public consultations. At the same time, the paper is weak on the contribution the planning system must make to health and well-being. It also puts back the date for achieving zero carbons homes to beyond 2025. It seeks to abolish the much criticised duty to cooperate but offers no framework for strategic planning to replace it.”*

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/news/press-release-ripping-up-the-system-wont-build-the-homes-we-need-tcpa-responds-to-planning-for-the-future-white-paper>

Council believes that existing planning procedures allow for local democratic control over future development and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them. However, these proposals reduce democratic accountability and public scrutiny and significantly reduce the scope for public participation and influence on planning applications within local communities.

Council, therefore, resolves to take part in the consultation in the planning proposals and that this motion be submitted as part of any consultation response.

3. PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Proposed by Councillor Pat Cleary
Seconded by Councillor Chris Cooke

Council notes;

The report on “Road Safety - Pedestrian Casualties” presented to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee on September 13th 2016.

The detailed response [1] to this report from Dr Ian Campbell to the Leader of the Council sent on December 14th 2016 which asserted that the report contained

- false or misleading statements
- unjustifiable claims
- flawed reasoning
- major omissions and
- lack of attention to detail

The lack of any meaningful response to Dr Campbell in the intervening four years.

That attempts by the MP for Wirral West to encourage a response from Wirral Council to Dr Campbell have also been ignored.

Council further notes that;

Merseyside is the worst police area in Great Britain for pedestrian casualties.

Pedestrian casualties in Wirral are heavily weighted towards East Wirral and disproportionately affect the very young and the very old.

If Wirral moved from the bottom quartile of metropolitan boroughs on traffic related casualties to the top quartile then, over a five-year period, the estimated benefits would be:

- 210 fewer KSI casualties including 8 fewer deaths
- 1270 fewer slight injuries

Council therefore agrees:

To refer the issue of Road Safety – Pedestrian Casualties and that it should form part of the work programme for the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee during the current municipal year

and

that this work should include ensuring that, within the current municipal year, a full response is provided to Dr Campbell's letter dated December 14th 2016 addressing each of the concerns listed above along with appropriate recommendations that would improve road safety in Wirral.

Sources

Why Wirral has Persistently Poor Road Casualty Figures:

https://www.wacm.org.uk/files/ann_scr_rep_13sep2016.pdf

4. CROSS PARTY UNITY ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Proposed by Councillor Elizabeth Grey

Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary

This council calls for cross party unity and collaboration in the fight to protect our residents from the rapidly escalating dangers of biodiversity loss and climate breakdown. This Council requests that all elected members put aside short term political gain and focus on the longer term need to reduce the worst effects of environmental damage caused by our current lifestyles. This Council urges all members to work together for the sake of our residents on these most important of issues. Council recognises that difficult decisions will need to be made and there will likely be disruption to our lives as we move from heavily polluting activities to more sustainable lifestyles. Council agrees to work positively and cooperatively in the spirit of our new committee system to support policies that will protect our residents from environmental threats.

5. REDUCING ROAD CASUALTIES

Proposed by Councillor Allan Brame

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Council notes that:

- In the last ten years, there has been no significant decline in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads, after decades of reducing casualties.
- According to Department of Transport figures, there are still on average five fatalities and 68 serious injuries in England and Wales every day.
- In the preamble to the consultation published by the Department of Transport in July this year, the Under Secretary of State for Transport said the review sought to 'build the fairest and most operationally effective enforcement capability in police and other agencies to deliver the best outcome for the safety of all road users'.
- In the same month, the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary published a damning report which predicted an increase in road deaths because,
 - according to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, there has been a 34% cut in funding in real terms for road policing between 2012/3 and 2019/20, leading to a reduction of police officers available for these duties.
 - these officers receive insufficient training and operational support.
 - road policing is 'seen as less of a priority than it should be' in most local plans and there is an 'unclear national strategy.'
- The HM Inspectorate called for urgent action as 'roads policing is not optional.'
- In September, Merseyside Police and the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership participated for five days in 'Project EDWARD' (Every Day Without a Road Death), as part of the welcome initiative to reduce road deaths.

Council resolves to:

- Ask Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport, making clear this Council's position that funding in real terms for road policing should be restored; that the HM Inspectorate's recommendations be implemented in full as a priority; and that a new national strategy for road policing and safety should be developed.
- Ask the Chief Executive to send copies of this letter to the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Panel and our local Members of Parliament to seek their support for the Council's position.
- Ask the Council's representatives on the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Panel to request the Panel revisit the local policing plan to ensure that roads policing is sufficiently prioritised
- Ask that this Motion be referred to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee so that it may review and refresh earlier work that was undertaken on the introduction of 20mph speed limits on all residential roads across the Borough with a view to making progress with their introduction.

6. SAVE OUR LOCAL JOBS AND SERVICES

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Jo Bird

Wirral Council notes:

1. Our communities are facing high levels of unemployment and climate change as well as the devastating impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.
2. Instead of “whatever it takes” promised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, this Conservative Government is threatening Wirral Council with further austerity and cuts.
3. Our appreciation and thanks to thousands of Wirral workers who provide essential services - including social care, waste collection and environmental health workers and many more.
4. Our country is facing an unprecedented jobs crisis. The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that, by the end of this year, nearly one in eight of the UK’s workforce will be unemployed – and some communities on the Wirral already have over 15% unemployment.
5. The need to work together with other Councils and local residents to challenge the Conservative government to provide the necessary resources to save our vital services – and enable secure, sustainable, fulfilling employment that pays at least the Real Living Wage.
6. Urgent measures are needed here and now to protect workers in many sectors from losing their livelihoods by not pulling the plug on job retention measures.
7. Unless ministers fix the current national funding shortfall for local authorities – estimated to be in the region of £10bn – there could be tens of thousands of job losses and catastrophic cuts to local services in England, according to Unison.
8. This government have found [£15bn for so called PPE contracts](#), but [without any transparency](#).

Wirral Council therefore agrees to:

- (1) Refer this to the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee to consider supporting the “Alliance for Full Employment” to mobilise all the resources of the UK to end the recession and create good, quality jobs.”
- (2) Ask Group Leaders to urge the government to provide fair funding to local councils in order to keep communities safe and build back better from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- (3) Ask Group Leaders to urge government ministers (in writing and on film) to find additional resources for councils to avoid devastating harm to services that have already suffered ten years of budget cuts.

7. CANCEL LOCAL AUTHORITY DEBT

Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird

Seconded by Councillor Christina Muspratt

To help save local services and build back better, this government should [cancel local authority debt](#), just as they cancelled NHS debt.

The financial crisis of local authorities is spiralling out of control as councils struggle to respond to the pandemic. The huge increase in expenditure comes on top of ten years of austerity which has severely weakened local authorities. Austerity is to councils what 'underlying conditions' are to people who are vulnerable to the virus. The government has told councils to do 'whatever it takes' and they will support them. Yet the funding offered thus far falls well short of spending associated with dealing with the pandemic never mind the big loss of income resulting from the lock-down. The Local Government Association has warned that without "a cast-iron commitment" to cover the coronavirus bill councils will begin to fail.

The CEO of CIPFA spoke of "**a financial tsunami of reduced income and increased costs**".

An unprecedented emergency requires emergency measures. **One such measure would be the cancellation of local authority debt held by the Public Works Loans Board, currently over £80 billion. This would provide councils with around £4.5 billion extra spending power a year** (the cost of servicing the debt last year).

In itself it would not resolve the funding issues resulting from austerity. There needs to be a return to funding of councils based on an annual assessment of social needs in each locality (abandoned by the coalition government in 2013). However, debt cancellation would be a simple step which would provide significant funding on an annual basis and would help to stabilise council finances. The government itself has set a precedent by cancelling £13.4 billion NHS debt.

An unprecedented crisis requires emergency measures. To stave off a collapse of council services the debt held by the Public Works Loans Board should be cancelled. This would give local authorities around £4.5 billion extra income a year.

Wirral Council resolves to:

- (1) Ask Group Leaders to contact ministers (in writing and on video) to cancel local authority debt.
- (2) Refer this matter to the Policy and Resources Committee to consider that the Council support the Campaign for Council Housing's call to Cancel Local Authority debt.