

Council – 7 December, 2020

Motions - with effect of proposed amendments incorporated

1. PUBLIC SECTOR PAY FREEZE

Proposed by Councillor Paul Stuart

Seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson

Across the UK Over 4 million public sector workers have had the threat of a three year pay freeze imposed on them by the Conservative Government who are determined to make those very people they clapped for each week pay for the Government's costly mistakes during the Coronavirus pandemic.

This will have huge implications to a large proportion of Wirral residents who are public sector employees. In 2019, the total number of employee jobs was 101,643. Of this number 23.9% are jobs within the public sector with Health being Wirral's largest industry sector accounting for over 22% of total employee jobs.

Is this how we thank our Nurses, Healthcare workers, teachers, firefighters, civil servants and police officers, who have already had a cut of up to 14% in real terms as a result of the austerity measures brought in by successive Tory governments since 2010?

These same workers risked their lives to save ours during the pandemic, nursed our loved ones, kept our schools open for vulnerable children, cared for the elderly, and kept our streets safe.

The Chancellor seeks to wilfully reignite the damaging debate around public versus private sector workers. The truth is, we need all workers in this country to be treated with dignity, respect and paid a fair wage. There needs to be parity between the two, but not by division, not by a race to the bottom.

This will have a detrimental affect the Wirral economy, with wages of nearly a quarter of the employee population facing a three year pay freeze and the cost of living inevitably rising, people will not have the disposable income they otherwise might to be able to spend locally.

Most families in poverty have at least one member in employment. In-work poverty is increasing. Imposing a three year pay freeze will exacerbate existing levels of poverty across Wirral. We cannot allow our public sector workers to be treated in this way. Government recognition of their vital role during the pandemic must extend further than meaningless gestures. Clapping once a week will not pay the bills.

Council commends the decision to pay the Real Living Wage to care workers; and

Council asks the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, and ask him to fulfil his pledge to 'level up' and not implement a three year pay freeze on public sector workers.

Council notes that this motion was drafted prior to the Chancellor's Spending Review and, in the interests of accuracy:

- The Spending Review includes a pay-rise for more than one million nurses, doctors and others working in our NHS
- Guarantees a pay rise of at least £250 for 2.1 million public sector workers who earn below the median UK wage of £24,000

And notes that the combined effect of these two policies will ensure a majority of public sector workers will see an increase in pay next year.

Council also welcomes the Chancellor's decision to accept in full the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission to:

- increase the National Living Wage by 2.2 per cent to £8.91
- to extend this rate to those aged 23 or above
- to increase the National Minimum Wage as well

These increases will benefit approximately 2 million people – ensuring a full-time worker earning the National Living Wage will see their pay rise by £345 next year, an effective increase of over £4,000 since the policy was introduced in 2016.

(ADDITIONAL WORDING - CONSERVATIVE GROUP AMENDMENT)

2. WIRRAL COUNCIL ASKED TO BACK THE RSPCA'S FIREWORKS CAMPAIGN

Proposed by Councillor Ian Lewis
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council is keen to ensure that all Wirral residents' concerns regarding the correct and safe use of fireworks in the Borough are taken seriously.

Council thanks Wirral residents who have shared concerns over the use, and misuse, of fireworks in the Borough, following the national campaign by the RSPCA and others, in 2019 and this year.

While they can bring much enjoyment to some people, fireworks also cause significant problems and fear for others.

They are a source of fear and distress for many animals, including pets, farm livestock and wildlife. Animals affected not only suffer psychological distress but can also cause themselves injuries – sometimes very serious ones – as they attempt to run away or hide from the noise.

Council also notes that fireworks, when misused, are dangerous and can be used to cause a public nuisance.

Council notes the work undertaken by the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, through Operation Banger, to reduce anti-social behaviour and sporadic events, linked to fireworks and bonfires and thanks all Fire Officers for their work on this.

Council therefore resolves to:

- continue to support a number of organised, local displays with residents encouraged to attend, including the River of Light Festival (a large scale organised public display which the Council plans responsibly for) and when safe to do so
- continue with its practice of working with Parks, Communications and other Council Teams and partners to promote safety messages and advertise events well in advance of the planned dates, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people
- continue to actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks
- ask the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee to investigate how the Council can work with our licensed venues to encourage the safe, responsible and neighbourly use of fireworks within their grounds
- request all Group Leaders write to the Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays and to consider options that could limit the private sales of fireworks to individuals
- support visits by Trading standards and the Fire Service to local suppliers of fireworks, including 'pop up' fireworks suppliers, to ensure compliance with existing legislation and to encourage fireworks that are appropriate for public display

3. GETTING CANCER SERVICES BACK ON TRACK

Proposed by Councillor Andy Corkhill

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes that we are seeing unprecedented disruption to cancer services on the Wirral, in the Liverpool City Region and across England.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, thousands of vital cancer treatments, appointments, and care were postponed or cancelled. People in desperate need of help are still unable to access the support they need and the emotional impact of delays is contributing to a crisis in mental health.

Cancer Research has seen hundreds of millions of pounds lost from its budget and a similar amount of charity donations that usually prop up the research system has been unforthcoming as people struggle financially.

We are lucky on the Wirral that we have two world class Cancer Centres on our doorstep, but even here there are residents who have had operations and treatments postponed or suspended. In areas less well served, residents are not even being

referred from their GPs to an Oncology Centre. The result of all this inaction means cancers are being caught later, sometimes too late to avoid preventable death.

~~Council believes that cancer should not be forgotten during the COVID-19 pandemic and requests the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and Senior Council Officers to write to the Government, demanding urgent action to deliver cancer recovery plans to prevent this happening, to clear the backlog and to get cancer services back on track.~~

Council notes that in May 2020, NHS England directed all NHS trusts providing cancer services to develop and implement Cancer Recovery Plans and that, since then, Trusts have reported every 14 days on their performance against these plans.

Council also welcomes the recent presentation given to the Partnerships Committee by the Clatterbridge Cancer Centre, which included progress against their recovery plan and the expansion of services at current and new locations to better serve all those diagnosed with cancer, their families and staff.

(DELETION OF FINAL PARAGRAPH AND REPLACEMENT WORDING – CONSERVATIVE GROUP AMENDMENT)

4. SUPPORTING CAR CLUBS IN WIRRAL

**Proposed by Councillor Pat Cleary
Seconded by Councillor Chris Cooke**

Council notes:

the targets for new housing imposed by government on Wirral, the desire to protect our precious greenbelt and the resulting need to achieve higher density levels in new housing developments;

the unanimous declaration of a Climate Emergency by Council in July last year and the related “clean travel” commitments outlined in the Cool 2 climate strategy with a clear objective to decarbonise local travel

the many changes indicated as part of the Cool 2 strategy which include: “a shift from individual ownership of vehicles to the use of travel services, e.g. car clubs”;

that Car Clubs are an alternative to car ownership. They enable people to share cars, and only pay when they are using them. Although many schemes now operate across the country, there is no established scheme for Wirral;

that many councils actively support local car clubs in a variety of ways – providing financial and/or marketing support, facilitating vehicle access and via specific policies which, for example, mandate provision for car club vehicles in new housing schemes.

Car clubs therefore have a role to play in supporting a number of the council’s objectives for transportation, regeneration, climate change and sustainability.

Council requests that:

The Economy, Regeneration and Development ~~Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport~~ *(alteration suggestion given by Councillor Pat Cleary)* Committee incorporate a study of car clubs into its work programme, to include:

- A survey of the current provision of car clubs in the Liverpool City Region
- An analysis of council support for car clubs elsewhere in the country and the potential application of similar support in Wirral
- ~~Recommendations as to the specific policies and measures required to help facilitate future car club provision in Wirral~~
- Recommendations as to the specific non-punitive or sanctionable policies and measures required to help facilitate future car club provision in Wirral.

(DELETION OF FINAL BULLET POINT AND REPLACEMENT WORDING – CONSERVATIVE GROUP AMENDMENT)

5. UNION LEARNING FUND

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny
Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones

Wirral Council notes:

1. On Tuesday 6 October, the TUC received a letter from the Department for Education saying that ministers have decided to end the Union Learning Fund from March 2021.
2. The Union Learning Fund (ULF) was set up in 1998 to support trade unions to widen access to learning and training in workplaces for both union members and non-members. The fund supports workplace projects across England, and is coordinated by the TUC.
3. Each year around 200,000 workers are supported into learning or training with union support through the ULF and the TUC. Thousands of workers, based in Wirral, are currently eligible for this support. These learners undertake all sorts of job-relevant learning and training, including basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills, apprenticeships and traineeships, vocational training, continuing professional development and many other informal and formal courses.
4. In 2019–20, the ULF was worth £12m. If upheld this decision will effectively end union-brokered skills training, and will undermine key government skills and retraining priorities at a crucial moment for our economy.

Wirral Council understands that:

1. Union learning reaches people that other DfE programmes do not reach.

2. There is an independent evaluation of the Union Learning Fund every two years. It was most recently evaluated by the University of Exeter in 2018. They spoke to 2,459 learners, and found:
 - Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of learners with no previous qualifications got a qualification.
 - 47 per cent of those with entry level or level 1 qualifications got a qualification at a higher level.
 - Four in five (80 per cent) said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job.
 - Two in three (62 per cent) said their new skills made them more effective in their current job.
 - One in five (19 per cent) said they had been promoted or given increased responsibility and one in 10 (11 per cent) got a pay rise.
3. The 2018 independent evaluation found that union learning provided excellent value for money:
 - For every £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund, there is a return of £12.30: £7.60 to the worker, £4.70 to the employer.
 - The Union Learning Fund delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4bn as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity.
 - The return to the exchequer (through reduced spending on welfare benefits and other factors resulting from the boost to jobs and wages) is £3.57 for each £1 spent on the Union Learning Fund.
 - The £12m government funding levered in an additional £54m from employers, unions and training providers in 2019–20.
4. The government has said it will put reskilling workers at the heart of its economic recovery plans after the pandemic. In September 2020, the government announced a new fully funded entitlement to achieve a first level 3 qualification, delivered through the National Skills Fund. Union learning is ideally placed to support this aspiration, in two ways:
 - directly, through delivering relevant level 3 courses to workplace learners, which is already a core function of the Union Learning Fund and was assessed as highly effective by the 2018 independent evaluation
 - directly, through enabling those with basic skills to learn and develop, putting them in a position to progress to level 3 skills
5. Successive governments of all parties have valued this role – and have supported the Union Learning Fund. As government funding, it is paid as a contract and is subject to stringent monitoring requirements. Union Learning Fund money can only be spent on the direct costs of getting working people into learning and skills training, and the associated costs of delivering this programme.
6. ULF projects adapted quickly to delivering online learning and training for workers during the pandemic and have actually surpassed the number of outcomes expected by government since the beginning of April.

Wirral Council resolves to:

- (1) Express its public support for the continuation of the Union Learning Fund.
- (2) Ask the Leader of the Council to raise this issue with our 4 local MPs and encourage them to call on the government to reverse its decision.

6. IT'S TIME TO PUT NEW ARRANGEMENTS IN PLACE

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes that:

- a. in 1999, a Green Paper was announced and the then Government set out to consult on the future of social care funding and a Royal Commission was set up. This published proposals which included a more generous means-test and free personal and nursing care;
- b. in 2009, the Labour Government's Green Paper proposed a National Care Service;
- c. in 2011, the Commission on the Funding of Care and Support, set up by the Coalition Government, proposed a cap on lifetime social care charges and a more generous means-test;
- d. in 2014, the Coalition Government legislated to implement the Commission's recommendations with cross-party support;
- e. in July 2015, the Conservative Government postponed their introduction citing funding pressures and a lack of preparedness by local authorities.

Council recognises that, since 2017, there has been a succession of promises to fund and reform the long term funding of Social Care. These have included:

The promise of a Green Paper made by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer in March 2017,

- a promise to "work to improve social care and bring forward proposals for consultation" in the Queen's Speech in June 2017;
- a statement, in November 2017, that a Green Paper would be published by the Parliamentary summer recess in 2018 and would "focus on care for older people";
- the setting out of seven principles to "guide the Government's thinking ahead of the Social Care Green Paper" in March 2018;
- the intention announced, in January 2019, to publish a Social Care Green Paper "by April 2019".

Finally, the Queen's Speech of 19 December 2019 included this commitment...

'My Ministers will seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care. They will ensure that the social care system provides everyone with the dignity and security they deserve and that no one who needs care has to sell their home to pay for it.'

Council believes that Wirral's residents need Parliament to deliver a way forward that will help them plan for their future care needs with some degree of certainty. Council recognises that all those involved in Wirral's social care sector have worked, through the past months of the pandemic, to support Wirral's people in care homes and in the community. It has faced shortages of PPE, distressed families who have lost loved ones and, latterly, the anxiety of those who have not been visited and been unable to visit.

In view of this pressured and chequered history, Council requests that Wirral's Members of Parliament do all they can to secure a consensus on a way forward that will secure funding and meet the needs of the frail and vulnerable members of our community.

Furthermore, Council requests the five Group Leaders write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressing the view of Council.

(ADDITIONAL WORDING - CONSERVATIVE GROUP AMENDMENT)

7. TACKLING CHILD POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION ON WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Tom Usher
Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

Poverty is devastating and deeply destabilising to families and communities, and residents from Wirral suffer from poverty at a higher rate than they did ten years ago, and at a higher rate than the national average. (Wirral children in low-income poverty has seen a 23.3% increase since 2015/16.)

It is particularly damaging during crucial stages of development, and the lasting effects that poverty has on physical and psychological processes are now well documented and long-lasting.

Child poverty is not simply about struggling to make ends meet financially but are linked with a wide range of deprivation issues such as poor-quality housing, poor health and low levels of educational attainment. Children in poverty are also more likely to go missing and have increased risk of exploitation and grooming.

~~Late interventions can be effective, but those made in the first five years of a child's life are by far the most effective. The early interventions are also the most cost-effective.~~

~~With the social problems in our borough getting worse over the last decade — not better — and with the complex and varied nature of the causes and effects of poverty, Council recognises the significant work that has already been done to establish a poverty profile in the borough. It endorses the workstreams already going on to reduce child poverty, and asks that Children, Young People and Education Committee considers this motion and requests it begins to lead on compiling a comprehensive child poverty strategy for the borough.~~

A strategy to eradicate child poverty needs to address family poverty and should have a national, as well as a local dimension which encompasses policies to lift families out of poverty, alongside action to reduce the impact of inadequate income by providing help at community level.

Wirral has been at the forefront of this approach through the work of the community based organisation Feeding Birkenhead Supporting Wirral one of a number of 15 pilot areas across the country that forms Feeding Britain.

To date examples of how this approach has been successful are:

1. Using locally gathered evidence, Feeding Britain highlighted to Government that serious delays in payment of Tax Credits was resulting in families being left without income for long periods. This brought about an improvement at national level to the administration of Tax Credits.
2. Feeding Britain raised issues of additional charges for people using pre-paid meters for their fuel. These are often people on low income and it was able to negotiate with Ofgen that a cap on pre-payment be introduced.
3. The model for school holiday provision developed in Wirral, was presented to MPs by Feeding Britain, got cross party support and was the basis of the School Holiday (and Activity) Bill.
4. Feeding Britain developed the scheme which has become Kick Start, aimed at providing employment opportunities for young people.

Any local strategy needs to be comprehensive and work across all Council Departments and with community and voluntary sector, health, business and private sector partners.

Wirral has a well-established network of community and voluntary sector organisation which have a strong history of co-operation to address food and fuel poverty and offer help with debt and other factors which reduce disposable income.

It is 4 years since the Council's strategy "Improving Life Chances" was developed by the then Director of Public Health and though there are several other very good initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, it is clear that there is a need for a more integrated approach which uses the learning from research and builds on the recent activity to alleviate food poverty.

Council therefore requests that:

- (A) The Policy and Resources Committee undertake to pull together the different policies and strategies aimed at alleviating the problems which lead to poverty into a comprehensive Anti-Poverty Strategy and recommends that the expertise and experience of organisations involved in this area of work are used to inform that strategy.

(B) That a set of performance indicators are developed which can monitor any improvement in poverty rates.

(C) That these are reported on an annual basis, or as appropriate, to Policy and Resources Committee and the policy is updated as required.'

**(DELETION OF FINAL TWO PARAGRAPHS AND REPLACEMENT WORDING –
INDEPENDENT GROUP AMENDMENT)**