Council – 22 March, 2021

Motions - with effect of proposed amendments incorporated

1. NHS PAY RISE

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson
Seconded by Councillor Yvonne Nolan

During the pandemic NHS staff gave their all. Doctors, nurses, porters, and others have worked tirelessly to preserve life on Wirral. Our continued efforts to deal with the impacts of the pandemic on the health of residents is reliant on a strong healthcare system filled with skilled and experienced individuals.

Council notes that the government's settlement will likely achieve the opposite of that. The Royal College of Nursing has stated there are already 40,000 nursing vacancies and that "significant numbers" will leave after this "slap in the face…" Council notes the local Trust (WUTH) had the equivalent of 158 Band 5 full time vacancies (18.05%) in August 2020 and is already dealing with rising sickness rates as demands of the pandemic takes its toll on frontline staff.

Reducing agency spend, and levels of sickness is something that the local Trust has been working to address, following the most recent CQC visit published in March of last year. Council wishes to add its voice to those telling the government that their proposed pay increase will harm our collective effort alongside health partners to address these problems and provide the best possible care and environment for Wirral health staff and patients alike.

Council notes this meagre pay rise does not take place in isolation but in the context of nearly a decade of disappointing pay settlements that have risked devaluing the over 10,000 people who work for NHS providers on Wirral. Even with a 1% pay rise, nurses' pay on Wirral will be £2,500 less than in 2010 when adjusted for inflation, with equivalent falls of £3,330 for paramedics and £850 for porters.

The government has defended its decision, with the Prime Minister stating, "We tried to give as much as we could". Wirral Council is acutely aware of the difficulties of balancing a budget, but fundamentally this comes down to priorities, not finances.

Council requests that the Leader calls upon the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to reconsider what is being viewed by many NHS staff as an insulting pay rise of 1%. It urges all local party leaders to work through their relevant channels to highlight their disappointment.

2. SUPPORT FOR BRITISH VALUES LOCALLY

Proposed by Councillor David Burgess-Joyce
Seconded by Councillor Michael Collins

The United Kingdom has a long and proud history on the world stage and has been a beacon for peace and democracy, ~~both within its own shores, and as a promulgator abroad~~ that has been the envy of the world. We have, as a result, a great reputation for ~~attracting~~ welcoming peoples from across the globe who want to make their home here for those very reasons; not least our ~~tolerance of race, lifestyle, politics, religion and gender~~ British values of tolerance and respect.

Council believes that pride in one's country is a spirit of comradeship for those who share our country, regardless of their background or walk of life. It is about recognising when our country is faltering and helping it to do better. Pride in one's country is representing what is best about it, and putting its best face forward, to the rest of the world. It isn't about believing our country is always right. It means apologising when our country has been wrong and learning from the mistakes of the past to make a stronger future.

The exiting of the European Union in January 2020 ~~prompted~~ potentially may lead to a flurry of new international trade deals, ~~designed~~ ideally to complement the existing EU arrangement, together with a ramping-up of the establishment of the UK as a sovereign nation free to engage at will. This potentially will lead to a greater drive to 'Buy British' and Wirral Council should play its part.

Council notes that the Council's Community Wealth Building strategy will lead to an increase of goods and services being procured locally, thus protecting and creating local jobs as well as retaining wealth in the local area.

A number of key moments in 2020 proved that the British public, ~~whether they voted for or against leaving the EU,~~ do not feel any less proud of their country and it is important we as public officials support this important view as we extend our reach on the world stage. As a primary display of this, Council therefore requests Policy and Resources Committee to consider and to support the visible display of the Union Flag in all public areas with immediate effect and show it on all correspondence. As part of this consideration Council requests that the Policy and Resources Committee consider that the Council already has a flag flying policy, the Union Flag is already flown on several public buildings and that any proposed changes to the flag flying policy should be subject to widespread public consultation that involves all communities, faiths and minorities groups.

This Council continues to uphold such pride in one's country and pride in our wonderful borough of Wirral and will continue to do so.

(DELETIONS AND INSERTIONS – LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT)

3. RECOGNISING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THOSE WHO CARE

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes that the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of Midwives and Unison have, rightly, been highly critical of the Government's submission to the NHS Pay Review Body.

Council observes that The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has attempted to defend the Government's 1% pay recommendation for nurses by saying it *"reflects the difficult financial circumstances that the country is in"*.

Council fully understands the concerns raised by Professor Dame Donna Kinnair DBE, the Royal College of Nursing's Chief Executive & General Secretary, that ...
"At a time when many experienced nurses are burnt out, exhausted and considering leaving the career they love, the link between unfair pay, staffing levels and patient safety is stark. A pay increase is vital so that existing staff stay in post and the health service is able to begin to fill the tens of thousands of nursing vacancies" (18.12.2020).

Council recognises that a trained, qualified and suitably remunerated workforce is desirable to secure the quality of health and care provision in the Borough.

In seeking remuneration that encourages workforce development and retention, it has in mind these issues:

(i) The residents of Extra Care Housing Schemes in the Borough such as Mendell Court, Harvest Court, Granville Court and Willow Bank Court, all benefit from the care and expertise of both social care and NHS staff.

(ii) The need for enough qualified nurses in Wirral was highlighted when staff from the Walk In Centre at Eastham were re-allocated to Arrowe Park Hospital when it faced particular pressures over waiting times in its Emergency Department.

(iii) the Terms of Reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board refer to 'a collaborative approach to commissioning improved health and care services' and also refer to a role which does 'review the financial and organisational implications of joint and integrated working across health and social care services'.

(iv) A large proportion of the workforce at Wirral University Teaching Hospital and other Health Service locations will be Wirral residents who would benefit from appropriate remuneration and career opportunities.

Having regard to these issues, Council therefore believes that the interests of Wirral's residents are best served by the award of a pay offer which encourages the recruitment and the retention of sufficient numbers of nurses, locally and nationally, and properly recognises the commitment of all those who have served our community with such dedication throughout the difficulties over the past year.

Accordingly, Council requests that Groups Leaders call upon the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to recognise that the Government's submission is completely misjudged and offensive in the circumstances. Council agrees, therefore, that whilst the Review Body is still considering the evidence, representations to that effect must be made to the NHS Pay Review Body.

4. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT BONDS

Proposed by Councillor Chris Cooke
Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary

Against the background of having to tackle a serious budget deficit, Council recognises the need to be innovative in securing a firm financial footing for the future of the borough.

Council believes that alternatives to borrowing from the Treasury via the Public Works Loans Board can be considered.

An increasingly popular and effective means of raising money for projects such as active travel, charging points for electric vehicles and renewable energy are Community Investment Bonds, sometimes known as Community Mutual Investments.

For example, these have been used successfully by West Berkshire Council to raise £1m to fund installation of solar panels on council buildings and by Warrington Council to fund its Affordable Green Homes project.

Community Investment Bonds can empower local residents by enabling them to invest in ethical projects benefiting their local communities for modest, but safe returns. They are an attractive and constructive alternative to saving with banks at low interest rates and with no guarantee that the money will be invested ethically. They can be an important addition to an area's community wealth building approach.

Council, therefore, asks that the Policy and Resources Committee includes in its work programme for the upcoming financial year an examination of Community Investment Bonds. This work to include:

- A review of the use of Community Investment Bonds elsewhere in the country
- An assessment of their potential application to fund projects in Wirral
- An outline of the practical steps required to set up Community Investment Bonds in Wirral

5. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION FAIR EMPLOYMENT CHARTER

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny
Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones

Wirral Council notes:

- A landmark partnership agreement on employment and skills, and public sector workforce development has been reached between the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, LCR Local Authorities and Trade Union partners.

- Brokered by the TUC, Metro Mayor, Acting Mayor and local leaders, the agreement will see Trade Unions and political leaders working together to develop the public sector workforce, promote good practice on learning and development and developing partnerships to deliver good quality Employment and skills projects across the city region.

- The recent launch of the Liverpool City Region Fair Employment Charter by Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram.

- That the Charter is a welcome move to help raise employment standards and working practices for people across Wirral and the wider City Region.

- That low-pay, insecure work and a lack of employee voice are problems that we are committed to tackling.

- That Decent jobs, access to quality training, upskilling and reskilling, and a strong focus on equality, diversity and inclusion are all necessary if we are to create a fair and inclusive city region.

- That this is a positive step to work with good employers to share best practice and improve conditions for local workers.

Therefore, Wirral Council resolves to:

Continue working with the Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region to champion healthy, fair, inclusive and just workplaces.

6. THE NHS COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Wirral Council remembers one year ago, the first reported covid death on the Wirral on 23 March, 2020. We mourn over 950 Covid related deaths on the Wirral.

There have been over 900 excess deaths, more than average for last 5 years. We share the ongoing grief of bereaved families and friends on the Wirral and beyond.

We re-double our efforts to combat this deadly disease and its disproportionate impact on communities already suffering from poverty and discrimination. We recognise inequalities of life expectancy on the Wirral where people in Heswall can expect to live 12 years longer than people in Rock Ferry.

We also support vaccine equality across the world. As the World Health Organisation says, none of us will be safe until everyone is safe.

Council recognises that, at the time of submission of the motion, 22,213,112 people have been vaccinated in the UK. In Wirral 128,633 residents have been vaccinated which includes all Wirral residents in Priority Groups 1-9 to be offered a vaccine. This covers the following residents:

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults.

2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers.

3. All those 75 years of age and over.

4. All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

5. All those 65 years of age and over.

6. Adults aged 16 to 65 years in an at-risk group.

7. All those 60 years of age and over.

8. All those 55 years of age and over.

9. All those 50 years of age and over.

Council wishes to commend the people of Wirral for their steadfastness and compliance with the rules around the use of face coverings, regular handwashing and maintaining social distancing coupled with working from home, when possible. We all recognise the huge impacts and difficulties this will have had and commit to supporting action on the consequential impacts on residents' mental health that the pandemic will have caused.

As Wirral follows the Roadmap and lockdown is cautiously eased, Council encourages Wirral residents to continue to follow the hands, face, space guidance, adhere to national guidance and reject the spurious anti-vaccine propaganda. Council encourages any Wirral resident who has not taken up their opportunity to be vaccinated to do so.

Council wishes to place on record its sincerest thanks to the scientists (publicly and privately funded), pharmaceutical companies, procurement professionals, GPs, healthcare professionals, Council staff and volunteers who have made this miracle a reality by ensuring the success of the vaccination programme here in Wirral.

Council also wishes to place on record our sincere thanks to all front-line workers (too many to mention here), who have placed their own health and lives in danger, to ensure that Wirral residents were able to live their lives as well as possible, under extremely difficult circumstances.

Council therefore requests the Leader of the Council to write to Wirral Council's Chief Executive and the Chair of Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group thanking them and their staff, on behalf of the Council, for this heroic effort.

(ADDITIONAL WORDING – LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT)

7. RIGHT TO FOOD

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson
Seconded by Councillor Christine Spriggs

We are seeing a crisis of food poverty born out of the political choices and systemic failings created over the past four decades, which have now reached a tipping point for so many in our communities. The figures are devastating for one of the richest nations in the world and highlight the inequality of the UK in 2020.

The Trussell Trust reports a soaring 81% increase in emergency food parcels from food banks in its network during the last two weeks of March 2020 compared with the same period in 2019, including a 122% rise in parcels given to children as the coronavirus pandemic continued to unfold.

There are consistently high rates of poverty across Wirral. We recognise the growing concern amongst our health and care professionals of the current situation and the likely exacerbation of poverty figures through the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and economic uncertainty as we enter 2021. Council notes the following information:

- During the pandemic Wirral Council has delivered nearly 18,000 food parcels to vulnerable residents across Wirral.
- In 2019, 17.7% of children lived in low-income poverty in Wirral. That equates to 10,687 children affected by poverty, and 16,512 people [who] used Wirral Foodbank, with a 25% increase in single parents using it last year.
- 14,753 is the number of people supported by Wirral Foodbank in 2020. This equates to 132,777 meals.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need for children to be able to access food and support activities during school holidays.

The National Food Strategy is the first independent review of England's entire food system for 75 years. Its purpose is to set out a vision for the kind of food system we should be building for the future, and a plan for how to achieve that vision. It is headed by Henry Dimbleby and next reports to Government in early 2021.

The Right To Food campaign is arguing that the 11 million people in food poverty should be central to this strategy. As the sixth richest nation in the world it is a travesty that our citizens are unable to feed themselves.

Enshrining the 'Right To Food' into law would clarify Government obligations on food poverty and would introduce legal avenues to hold Government bodies accountable for violations.

This Council calls for the 'Right To Food' to be incorporated into the 'National Food Strategy'. We ask the Leader to write to Henry Dimbleby to further this request.

8. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

~~Council acknowledges the unprecedented support provided by Government to the residents and businesses of Wirral throughout the Covid pandemic.~~

~~So far, the Council has received more than £206.4 million in direct Covid funding support from the Government, on top of the Council's base budget of £304.7 million, set in March 2020.~~

Council has received more than £206.4 million in direct Covid funding from Government

Council notes that, of this £206.4 million from the Government:

- £128.9 million was to support businesses in the form of non-discretionary and discretionary grants, business rates relief and business district improvement funding
- £39.4 million was for the Council to manage the delivery of services and alleviate pressures resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic
- £10 million was to help prevent the spread of Covid infection in Care Homes
- £8.6 million was for Test, Trace and Outbreak Management support
- £7.5 million was to replace lost Council income
- £3.9 million was for Council Tax Hardship support
- £2.1 million was for Community Testing
- £1.3 million was for homelessness support to ensure 'Everybody In'
- £1.2 million was for supporting our most vulnerable families with food and power via the Covid Winter Grant Scheme
- £0.9 million was for increasing workforce capacity in Care Homes
- £0.5 million was to support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents
- £0.5 million was for emergency food and supplies
- £0.4 million was for Test & Trace £500 Payment Support Payment Scheme
- £0.3 million was for re-opening our High Streets safely
- £0.3 million was for new burdens relief
- £0.2 million was for ensuring Covid compliance

In addition, the Council has requested and received exceptional financial support (capitalisation directive) by the Government whereby a further £24 million of funding can be realised.

Government has continued to demonstrate it is committed to levelling-up Wirral, with £28.2 million awarded to Wirral as part of the Future High Streets Funding programme and the announcement of Freeport status for the Wirral dockland areas as part of the LCR bid.

Council further notes that:

- 139,000 Wirral jobs were protected through the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
- £62.3 million was distributed to Wirral residents via the Government's Self Employment Income Support Scheme
- £209.9 million has been loaned to Wirral businesses via the Government Business Interruption and Bounce Back Loan schemes

~~Council believes it is right that all political parties recognise the Government's ongoing support for Wirral and work together to ensure the future prosperity of our residents.~~

~~Council therefore, on behalf of Wirral residents and businesses, thanks the Government for the unprecedented and necessary level of support and requests the Chief Executive and political Group Leaders write to the Government thanking them for their support so far and committing to working together, constructively, with the Government for the prosperity of Wirral's residents and our current and future businesses.~~

Council notes that whilst the Chancellor in his recent Budget extended the Self Employed Income Support Scheme, Excluded UK have said that there are at least three million taxpayers and households who have been affected by loss of income due to Covid-19, and the further support announced does not account for the decimation of businesses and income from the last year, and for many now included, this is too little too late.

The following letter has been sent to Rishi Sunak and signed by the co-founders of Excluded UK, cross party MPs, Sir John Bird, academics and business leaders.

"Dear Chancellor,

We are writing to you from ExcludedUK with collective support from a wide range of organisations and many individuals with regard to gaps in the government Covid-19 support scheme affecting some three million UK taxpayers.

While many have received vital support since the onset of the pandemic, so many others have been left behind. The three million figure, now so often referred to, comes from HMRC data and BEIS Business Population Estimates and has been confirmed by figures released by the National Audit Office. It is not just the 1.5 million self-

employed that you have previously referred to. Standard Life Foundation's latest survey estimated that as many as 3.8 million are in fact affected.

The impacts are far-reaching and only set to become more acute, with ever-increasing financial hardship as each month passes and spiralling debt that has already devastated people's livelihoods and businesses and will continue to do so for years to come without the support so vitally needed. These impacts equally extend to households – children and families, and for small business owners, their employees, freelancers and contractors too if their own businesses are in peril.

This is a substantial section of the workforce and they need support to get through this crisis – people who were furthering their careers by starting a new job, those in between jobs, those who for whatever reason were denied furlough, those who took the plunge to set up a new business, those with entrepreneurial spirit serving their communities and beyond, freelancers, those combining PAYE and self-employment, those whose maternity or parental leave fell at a certain time, people excluded due to pensions, bereavement payments, carers' allowance, redundancy, shielding and more.

These are people who are the lifeblood of our economy and communities, many who have been taxpayers for years and not previously had to rely on the State, and businesses that are viable. Moreover, people are facing the crisis among so much uncertainty that still lies ahead, particularly for those in the hardest hit sectors.

Various proposals have been presented to the Treasury that are not complex and do guard against fraud. We urge you to consider these and include measures in the upcoming Budget that will provide the much-needed financial support for those who find themselves outside of the scope of the eligibility criteria of the existing schemes. Not helping these people is equally at odds with economic recovery.

Providing this support now is the right and fair thing to do."

Council wishes to acknowledge to Government on behalf of many local businesses and residents that the money provided by government has been important to their survival and is grateful to all staff involved in the speedy and efficient administration of government Covid funding, however that large numbers of people have been excluded from such assistance.

Council further notes that Government told us to 'do whatever it takes' but in fact only reimbursed us for 75p out of every 95p in loss of income as a result of Covid. Council notes that this has resulted in a shortfall of £6.944m in funding, which forced us to request a Capitalisation Directive. Council notes that the mishandling of successive lockdowns, the PPE scandal which left our care homes vulnerable, and councils struggling to keep up with ever-changing guidance at a time where their resources were already depleted. The National Audit Office has recently noted that 10 years of austerity has made local authority finances structurally fragile. It said "funding reductions …means that authorities' finances were potentially more vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic". It urges the Government to draw up a long-term plan for councils to help them recover from the 'financial scarring' caused by the pandemic.

Council requests that the Chief Executive and political Group Leaders write to the Government with the above letter which will help ensure more Wirral residents and businesses are supported financially and that Government put local authority finances on a long-term sustainable footing.

(DELETIONS AND INSERTIONS – LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT)

9. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Proposed by Councillor Tony Norbury
Seconded by Councillor Christine Spriggs

We as Wirral Borough Council recognise the extreme hardships faced by refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from across the world, many fleeing from war, oppression and other human rights violations.

Council believes we as a council want to help and play our part in making the World a better place for all by pledging to become a recognised Borough of sanctuary, officially joining the network of councils who are already recognised as places of sanctuary and welcome for all.

Council would wish to make to make Wirral a borough where:

- Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are treated with respect, dignity and equality
- A fair, humane and effective process is in place to support migrant communities
- An empathetic, people centred approach is in place
- Co-production and collaborative processes are valued, to engage the wider community and migrant communities
- The barriers to integration and interaction within the community are removed.

Council asks the Policy and Resources Committee to include in its work programme for the forthcoming municipal year, to consider:

(1) embedding a borough of sanctuary and welcome workstream into our policy committee structure linking into the work already underway through our MEAS team linked to our schools and expanding BAME communities supported by our council partners at Wirral Change, The Deen Centre and The multi-Cultural Organisation

(2) by pledging to:

- Challenge and campaign for migrant rights and against the ‘hostile environment‘
- Celebrate the contribution refugee, asylum seeker and migrant communities bring to the borough of Wirral
- Raise awareness about some of the issues these communities face
- Facilitate training for local businesses and organisations to ensure they can offer a service which is welcoming to all migrants

- Be inclusive throughout the process by listening and engaging with people with lived experience, community organisations, statutory services, faith groups, businesses and much more.