



Council

Town Hall
Wallasey

29 January 2009

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held at **6.15 pm on Monday 9 February 2009** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects:

Contact Officer: Andrea Grant
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Website: <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

AGENDA

1. MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

To receive the Mayor's announcements and any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Council are invited to consider whether they have a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

3. PETITIONS

To receive petitions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 21.

4. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 36)

To receive as a correct record the minutes of the extraordinary and ordinary meetings of the Council held on 15 December 2008.

5. MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL

To consider the following matters referred to the Council for decision (copies of the reports can be provided for members on request). Any other items, from the Cabinet meeting on 5 February, will be included in a supplement to this summons.

5.1 Cabinet minute 325 (15 January) - Transforming Wirral: Strategic Asset Review

Recommendation:

On 27 November Cabinet agreed the Strategic Asset Review, recommended by officers in principle, subject to consultation with the people of Wirral.

Cabinet welcomes the high level of public participation in this consultation, as set out in the Cabinet report. Cabinet notes that residents also made it clear that they were prepared to pay more to keep facilities open.

Cabinet acknowledges that residents on a peninsula believe it is particularly important that their children have the opportunity to learn to swim and take part in swimming activities and that there have been representations from the public and from the health community on the importance of swimming as a way of tackling obesity.

Cabinet noted the often passionate support of what were felt to be local community facilities and recognised the considerable time and effort put in by a number of correspondents who sought to provide detailed arguments for the retention of a particular facility.

Cabinet is particularly grateful for the hard work that went into the detailed document submitted on the importance of Woodchurch Leisure Centre to the local community.

Cabinet also recognises the high regard in which Wirral residents hold their historic buildings and accepts the need to respect Wirral's heritage.

It also recognises the clear commitment of staff, residents, local musicians and artists and young people to maintaining good cultural facilities and suitable performance venues on the Wirral and thanks those who submitted detailed reasons why these are important to the life of the community as a whole.

However, Cabinet is also mindful of the current economic climate and the hardship that will create for many Wirral people.

It is mindful as well of the fact that definite action is required to tackle Wirral's budgetary problems and that the recession will also impact on the Council in a number of ways, increasing the need for firm financial control in order to protect Wirral's council tax payers;

Bearing in mind the Council's Corporate Priorities and in particular the need to do everything possible to tackle social exclusion and deprivation, **Cabinet therefore resolves as follows, and recommends to Council that:**

- (1) The Woodchurch Leisure Centre be retained;
- (2) Officers are asked to explore the possibility of persuading any of the Council's strategic partners who may benefit from the use of the Leisure Centre to contribute towards the £374,000 subsidy currently paid by the Council to keep the Leisure Centre open and to investigate the level of current charges to swimming clubs, schools and other organisations across the borough to ensure that the Council Tax payers are receiving good value for money which should be the subject of a report to Cabinet on February 5th as part of the budget setting process;
- (3) The Woodchurch Community Centre adjoining the Leisure Centre be considered for transfer to the Community within a two year time frame and the Leisure Centre and Community Centre be seen as the clear focus for community activities;
- (4) The two year time frame for community asset transfer will expire on 16 January 2011;
- (5) A two-year provision be set up to allow Guinea Gap to remain open pending a better understanding of the potential scale of any development along the waterfront and the possibility of bringing forward any Government investment in the Housing Market Renewal Initiative which could contribute towards kick starting any major development initiative.
- (6) That negotiations are held with Arena/Leasowe Community Homes for the transfer of the Leasowe Recreation Centre to the benefit of the community, subject to the agreement of satisfactory terms and conditions.
- (7) Cabinet notes that members of the public made it clear during the consultation period that they believed the main focus of activity in the Bromborough/Eastham area should be located in Bromborough. Cabinet therefore resolves to locate the multi- purpose complex at Bromborough Civic Centre, incorporating the Bromborough Library and the One Stop shop currently located in Eastham.

(8) This would, as a consequence, entail the closure of Eastham library. Residents of Eastham will be given the opportunity to explore alternative ways of making best use of all the facilities in Eastham to meet community needs, including the possibility, if the community so wishes, of a community transfer of the library building, proper access to IT facilities where they are needed, and a remote book ordering point in a relevant location.

(9) That, in response to substantial public representation, and in recognition of the fact that it is geographically central to a number of deprived areas and housed in a building of historic interest, Upton Library be retained and Woodchurch Library closed.

(10) In view of the fact that the closure of Eastham library and Woodchurch library was not directly set out in the proposals for consultation, transitional finance of up to three months, to the end of June 2009, will be available to allow residents to consider the best use of buildings within their communities.

(11) That the development of the five major multi-purpose complexes in Bebington, Birkenhead, Liscard, Moreton and West Kirby (including brand new build in Moreton and Liscard) be confirmed.

(12) That the smaller, community focused, multi-purpose complexes located in Greasby, Heswall, Leasowe, Rock Ferry and St. James, with the addition of Bromborough, be agreed and that the delivery of services in the Upton/Woodchurch areas be provided by a combination of the Woodchurch Leisure Centre, Upton Library and Upton One Stop Shop in the Department for Work and Pensions site.

(13) That, in response to substantial public representation, Pensby Library be retained.

(14) That the closure of the following libraries be confirmed: Beechwood Library, Eastham Library, Higher Bebington Library, Hoylake Library, Irby Library, New Ferry Library, Prenton Library, Ridgeway Library, Seacombe Library, Wallasey Village Library and Woodchurch Library.

(15) Where the community, or organisations serving the community, express a specific interest in a library building after closure, particularly where there is a clear lack of alternative community facilities for potential community transfer, that potential for community transfer of the redundant library building will be vigorously pursued.

(16) Officers are also asked to carry out an audit of community activities within Libraries scheduled for closure to

assess which of those activities could usefully be carried out in other ways, through Children's Centres, Schools, Community Centres or other Council buildings, with particular regard to activities for under 5s, access to technology and homework assistance for school children, access to technology for the unemployed and access to technology and activities for the elderly.

(17) In line with the Strategic Asset Review proposals, a system will be established for automatically reserving books online, from home, or from a number of community-based IT access points from which information technology can be accessed. These could be located in schools, community centres or other Council buildings, but will need to reflect the views of the local community. Officers are also asked to consider sympathetically the potential for limited transfer to interested community venues of currently held book stock.

(18) Officers will work with the voluntary sector to expand the existing service to the elderly, housebound or vulnerable members of the communities and will ensure that door to door transport schemes already operating for those with disabilities, such as Dial-a-Ride, will be well advertised to current library users. In the light of this, and public reaction to the proposal, the option of a mobile library service will not be progressed at this time but will be kept under review.

(19) That it be made perfectly clear that Birkenhead Central Library will remain open in its current building, which will be maintained as required; that there is no intention, and never was any intention, to demolish the building and that suitable alternative uses will be found for the building which will take account of its historic importance should the Council decide in the future that the needs of the Borough for a modern Central Library would be better met with a different building or on a different site.

(20) That the following facilities be transferred to community management, where the community expresses an interest, within a two year period and in line with the Strategic Asset Review recommendations and that finances be identified in the budgetary process to assist communities in making this a viable proposition: Hoylake Community Centre, Westbourne Community Centre, Livingstone Street Community Centre, Noctorum Community Centre, Leasowe Lighthouse, Seacombe Community Centre, The Grange, Grosvenor Ballroom, Vale House, Greasby Community Centre, Overton Community Centre, Delamere Community Centre, Mayer Hall, New Ferry Village Hall, 65 The Village, Victoria Hall, Windsor Close Community Centre, Heswall Hall, Turntable Building, Kylemore Community Centre, Alexander Hall and Pensby Community Centre, Woodchurch Community Centre and Leasowe Community Centre. Community IT access points

will be provided where required as part of the transfer.

(21) That Grange Road West Sports Centre also be considered under the same terms for transfer to the community, and that discussions take place with those who currently use the facility, or other community members if necessary, to secure its continued operation.

(22) That Beechwood Recreation Centre and Community Centre be transferred for Community use and that work be undertaken by officers to assess the best way in which this can take place with a report back to Cabinet as appropriate.

(23) That the Wirral Museum be closed but that a new sustainable use which will secure the future of this iconic building be sought and expressions of interest invited.

(24) That expressions of interest in Pacific Road Theatre by community/charitable trust/commercial operator or other interested organisation be sought, or given the considerable interest already expressed, be considered as part of a bidding process, to run the facility as an independent arts and performance venue.

(25) That the Wirral Transport Museum be transferred to a Community Development Trust, given suitable terms and conditions, or, if interest is expressed by an operator in the whole Pacific Road/Tramshed site, that the specialist role of the Transport Museum be protected as far as possible.

(26) That the office accommodation aspects of the Strategic Asset Review be implemented and officers be asked to accelerate the process of making savings from the rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation.

(27) That the closure of Bridge Court, Fellowship House, 98 Bidston Road, 4 Cavendish Road, Cavendish Enterprise Centre, Feltree House, Rosewarne, 5/7 St. Andrews Road, Shore Road Pumping Station, Hillcroft, 245 Liscard Road, 16/18 Rullerton Road, Dock Road Depot, 19 Heath Road, Kennet Close, the old Courthouse and Mendell Lodge be agreed, and appropriate arrangements made for their disposal.

(28) Cabinet is grateful for the views expressed by the Wirral Enabling Fulfilling Lives Group and confirms that no decision on the future of Cambridge Road Day Centre in New Brighton or Highcroft Day Centre in Bebington has been taken and that the future of these buildings and associated service provision will be considered as part of the Department of Adult Social Services review of services.

(29) That the Strategic Asset Review be agreed, subject to

the above amendments and endorsements.

(30) That, as a consequence of the above, the revenue saving of £3,101,000 be agreed; and

(31) that a provision of £1,863,000 be created to cover the items above and any necessary transitional funding.

NB. In accordance with the procedure adopted for other budget proposals agreed by the Cabinet, this minute will be forwarded to the Corporate Services, Culture Tourism and Leisure Services and Finance and Best Value Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consideration. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be submitted to the Council on 9th February 2009.

5.2 Cabinet minute 336 (15 January) - Transportation Capital Programme 2009/10

Recommendation

That it be recommended to the Council that the proposed Transport Capital Programme for 2009/10, set out in [the Director's] report, be approved.

6. MATTERS FOR NOTING

The following matters, determined by the Cabinet, are drawn to the Council's attention, as required by the Constitution (copies of the reports can be provided for members on request):

- (i) Cabinet minute 327 (15 January) – The Warrens, Thingwall – Disposal of main depot site (Reason: waiving of call-in);
- (ii) Cabinet minute 337 (15 January) – Transforming Adult Social Services – Early voluntary retirement and voluntary severance (Reason: waiving of call-in).

7. QUESTIONS

To deal with questions from councillors and from members of the public, in accordance with Standing Order 11.

8. MATTERS REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

To consider and determine any references from overview and scrutiny committees, in particular any from the following meetings relating to the Strategic Asset Review:

Finance and Best Value – 2 February
Culture, Tourism and Leisure – 3 February
Corporate Services – 4 February

9. NOTICES OF MOTION

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1) and are listed in the order received:

9.1 MOTION: Wirral Partnership Homes

Proposed by Councillor Alan Taylor
Seconded by Councillor Doyle

(1) This Council recognises the significance of the in-depth presentation given to the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 January 2009 and welcomes the Department of Regeneration's technical and advisory assistance to the company in finding a solution to the problems raised by the conditions found in modernising their tower blocks and sheltered housing.

(2) Furthermore this Council again welcomes the decision of the Cabinet in endorsing Wirral Partnership Homes' request to modify the representation required for a quorate meeting of the Board, thus enabling the company to operate effectively in these difficult times.

(3) Council believes that it is essential that the Conservatives play a full part in this process, to work to minimise the impact of the problems experienced by Wirral Partnership Homes on the residents of Wirral.

9.2 MOTION: Strategic Asset Review

Proposed by Councillor Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Mitchell

(1) Council recognises that Cabinet minute 325 (Transforming Wirral - Strategic Asset Review), welcomed:

(a) *"the high level of public participation"* in the consultation process and

(b) *"the considerable time and effort put in by a number of correspondents who sought to provide detailed arguments for the retention of a particular facility"*.

(2) Council believes that this specifically opposed the

closure of Bromborough Library and Civic Centre and did not call as such, for the relocation of the One Stop Shop, but concentrated on the importance of the Library and Civic Centre.

(3) Council therefore does not consider that the consultation showed, in any way, a desire by Bromborough or Eastham residents for the closure of Eastham Library as a library or re-location of such a key One-Stop Shop drawing from a wide area.

(4) Council, having regard to sections 7 and 8 of the Cabinet decision, which determines that Eastham library should close, believes that this decision is based on a misreading and misunderstanding of the points raised in the petitions, letters and at the meeting at Hulme Hall.

(5) Council therefore calls upon the Cabinet:

(i) to re-examine this matter in detail in the light of the views being expressed, particularly by Eastham and Woodchurch residents who had no reason, until 15 January, to campaign for the retention of their valued services;

(ii) to take no action on the present decision and, for the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that budgetary provision is retained in the base budget to continue services until a decision based on the responses to consultation has been made and the level of service provision has been determined.

9.3 **MOTION: Above-inflation increases in rent**

Proposed by Councillor Leah Fraser
Seconded by Councillor Blakeley

(1) Council notes with concern that, at a time when many families are feeling the pinch, housing associations and registered social landlords are setting above-inflation increases in rent.

(2) Council believes the use of the recorded increase in Retail Price Index in September 2008 of 5% is not an accurate indicator today and will see many tenants in Wirral paying disproportionate increases in rent.

(3) Council therefore welcomes the efforts of the Local Government Association, supported by many RSLs and publications such as Inside Housing, for the Government to enable rent increases to be kept to a more manageable increase.

(4) Council calls on the social landlords in Wirral to consider the impact of increases on tenants and also asks the

Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council to write to the LGA and Department for Communities and Local Government endorsing the need for RSLs to be given the freedom to set lower increases without being penalised in future years.

9.4 **MOTION: Reckless Tory Economics**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies
Seconded by Councillor Foulkes.

(1) Council notes, with amazement, the breathtakingly reckless economics behind the Conservative Group's behaviour on this Council. This includes:

(a) a virtually total opposition to all savings proposed by the Cabinet in order to reduce the burden on Wirral's council tax payers. If this were implemented it would so far have cost the council tax payers a minimum of £11m, which is the equivalent of an 11% increase in council tax over and above the current projected increase of 4%, giving an increase of 15%. (Council further notes that as increases of over 5% are likely to be capped, this would not only incur further costs to the Council in re-billing, but mean that over ten million pounds worth of Council services would have to be dramatically slashed within the period of just a few weeks in order to restore the budget to a legal level);

(b) the use of a much vaunted £90m of reserves to support their lack of any viable alternative to the measures currently proposed by Cabinet. This would not only bankrupt the Council for the future, in the same way that their use of £13m of balances to hide the impact of the poll tax created a hole in Wirral's finances from which we are even now only just recovering, but would mean, amongst other things:

- raiding school balances to support general Council expenditure, which is illegal;
- running the Council with zero balances, instead of the £6m recommended by the District Auditor, which means any minor overspend immediately places the Council into an illegal position;
- using the Council's insurance fund, which is used to self-insure against claims or, in the case of very large claims, pay the initial excess. This would effectively leave the Council uninsured and liable for massive future costs and legal cases;
- using money paid in advance by the Government to fund specific schemes for purposes other than that for which the money is reserved, which would leave the Council liable for major clawbacks in the future;
- using money reserved against potential overpayment by the Government on housing benefits, which again would leave the Council liable to large claims without

the money to meet them;

- using money allocated from other sources for specific projects which are not yet completed.

(2) Council further notes that this reckless behaviour, which would severely damage the Council's financial position and ability to offer services to the people of Wirral, is matched by the national position of the Conservative Party, which is to cut £5billion from public spending, including £240million from the Formula Grant paid to local authorities and at the same time promise a council tax freeze, leading to further devastation of local services.

(3) Council also notes that the dodgy accounting of the local Conservative Group is matched by that of their party nationally, who have so far declared the use of the same pot of money (government advertising and consultancy fees) twice for completely different purposes.

9.5 **MOTION: Conservative failure to attend Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Proposed by Councillor Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan

(1) This Council expresses extreme concern that, at the normal scheduled Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 15 January 2009, not one representative of the Conservative Party attended. This is despite the fact that the Conservatives are entitled to three seats on the Committee.

(2) Council is particularly concerned that the Conservative Party felt unable to arrange for even one representative to consider many crucial scheduled agenda issues, on behalf of the people of Wirral, including:

- Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme 2008-2011 - Mid Year Progress Report 2008/09
- Housing Stock Transfer - Progress Report
- Presentation on Tower Blocks and Sheltered Housing
- Presentation on Homelessness: Rough Sleepers/Street Drinkers
- Review of Scrutiny Work Programme
- Anti-Social Behaviour Watch Schemes
- Policing in Wirral
- Clearance programmes for areas including Wallasey
- HMRI areas including Seacombe, Liscard and Egremont.
- CCTV Control Room Report

(3) This Council believes that all political parties should accept a responsibility to consider, and make decisions on,

crucial issues, within the Council's agreed committee structure, on behalf of the Wirral electorate. By their non-attendance, the Conservatives have shown that they are not willing to accept such responsibilities, and, at the same time, have badly let down the Wirral electorate, who expect real leadership from their elected representatives, as opposed to "political posturing".

10. MATTERS FOR DEBATE

Pursuant to Standing Order 5(1)(m), and in accordance with Standing Order 5(3), to consider written comments on or objections or amendments to minutes submitted under Standing Order 7(2), together with those motions submitted under item 8 above that the Council agrees to debate at this meeting and any minority reports submitted in accordance with Standing Order 35(4).

11. VACANCIES

To receive nominations, in accordance with Standing Order 25(5), in respect of changes (if any) in the membership of the Cabinet and committees, and to approve nominations for appointments to outside organisations, including:

(i) The following person has been nominated to fill the vacancy of parent governor representative on the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Mrs Maureen Cain, 8 Ganney's Meadow Road, Woodchurch.

(ii) The Council has been asked to fill a vacancy that has arisen among the trustees of the West Kirby Charities.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To consider any other items of business that the Mayor accepts as being urgent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. M.', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

COUNCIL

Monday, 15 December 2008

Present: The Mayor (Councillor A E R Jones) in the Chair
Deputy Mayor (Councillor A Hodson)

Councillors	RL Abbey	K Hayes	A Pritchard
	T Anderson	P Hayes	J Quinn
	C Blakeley	A Hodson	M Redfern
	A Bridson	S Holbrook	P Reisdorf
	S Clarke	A Jennings	L Rennie
	IO Coates	P Johnson	D Roberts
	J Crabtree	AER Jones	L Rowlands
	G Davies	J Keeley	J Salter
	P Davies	S Kelly	H Smith
	WJ Davies	B Kenny	T Smith
	F Doyle	D Kirwan	W Smith
	W Duffey	D Knowles	P Southwood
	D Elderton	I Lewis	J Stapleton
	G Ellis	AR McLachlan	A Taylor
	S Foulkes	M McLaughlin	S Taylor
	L Fraser	C Meaden	C Teggins
	G Gardiner	D Mitchell	G Watt
	J George	R Moon	R Wilkins
	P Gilchrist	S Moseley	J Williams
	JE Green	S Mountney	P Williams
	J Hale	S Niblock	K Wood
	T Harney	C Povall	

Apologies Councillors S Quinn

68 HONORARY ALDERMAN

The Council considered the recommendation contained in minute 50 of the Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee (17 November 2008) that the title of Honorary Alderman be conferred upon Mr John Robert Cocker in recognition of his eminent service to the Council.

Resolved - That, in pursuance of the provisions of Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the title of Honorary Alderman be conferred upon Mr John Robert Cocker in recognition of his eminent service to the Council.

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COUNCIL

Monday, 15 December 2008

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor A E R Jones) in the Chair
Deputy Mayor (Councillor A Hodson)

Councillors	RL Abbey	K Hayes	A Pritchard
	T Anderson	P Hayes	J Quinn
	C Blakeley	A Hodson	M Redfern
	A Bridson	S Holbrook	P Reisdorf
	S Clarke	A Jennings	L Rennie
	IO Coates	P Johnson	D Roberts
	J Crabtree	AER Jones	L Rowlands
	G Davies	J Keeley	J Salter
	P Davies	S Kelly	H Smith
	WJ Davies	B Kenny	T Smith
	F Doyle	D Kirwan	W Smith
	W Duffey	D Knowles	P Southwood
	D Elderton	I Lewis	J Stapleton
	G Ellis	AR McLachlan	A Taylor
	S Foulkes	M McLaughlin	S Taylor
	L Fraser	C Meaden	C Teggins
	G Gardiner	D Mitchell	G Watt
	J George	R Moon	R Wilkins
	P Gilchrist	S Moseley	J Williams
	JE Green	S Mountray	P Williams
	J Hale	S Niblock	K Wood
	T Harney	C Povall	
		A Pritchard	
		J Quinn	

Apologies Councillor S Quinn

69 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor welcomed pupils of Riverside Primary School to the Council Chamber. The pupils entertained Members with Christmas Carols prior to the start of the meeting.

70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at the meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest. The following declarations were made:

Councillor Moira McLaughlin – a prejudicial interest in Minute 84 (Adult Social Care – Public Interest Disclosure) due to a friendship with a potentially interested party;

Councillor Steve Niblock – a personal interest in Minute 96 (The Economy) due to his membership of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority;

Councillor Pat Williams – a prejudicial interest in Minute 84 (Adult Social Care – Public Interest Disclosure) due to his involvement in the matter at appeal stage;

Councillor Ian Lewis – a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Leasowe Youth Play and Community Association, Leasowe Community Homes and friends of Leasowe Lighthouse, Minute 88 (Borderlands electrification) due to his membership of Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive) and Minutes 80 (Questions) due to his membership of the friends of Leasowe Lighthouse;

Councillor Tony Pritchard – a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Vale House Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Sue Taylor - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to her membership of Vale House Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Bill Duffey - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Vale House Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Kate Wood – a personal interest in Minute 89 (School Crossing Patrols) as a grandparent;

Councillor Simon Mountney - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Moreton Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Chris Blakeley - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Moreton Community Centre Joint Management Committee and Minute 88 (Borderlands electrification) due to his membership of Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive);

Councillor Lesley Rennie - a personal interest in Minute 96 (The Economy) due to her membership of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority;

Councillor Suzanne Moseley - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Moreton Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor John Hale - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Hoylake Youth and Community Centre Joint Management Committee and Westbourne Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Leah Fraser – a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to her membership of Liscard Community Facilities Complex Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Karen Hayes – a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to her membership of Liscard Community Facilities Complex Joint Management Committee;

Councillor James Keeley - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Liscard Community Facilities Complex Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Tom Anderson - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Overton Community Centre Joint Management Committee and Woodchurch Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Bob Wilkins - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Pensby Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Peter Reisdorf – a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to his membership of Greasby Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Jean Quinn - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to her membership of Greasby Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Gill Gardiner - a personal interest in Minutes 86 (Strategic Asset Review) and 87 (Transforming Wirral) due to her membership of Greasby Community Centre Joint Management Committee;

Councillor Gerry Ellis – a personal interest in Minute 96 (The Economy) due to his membership of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority; and

Councillor Jeff Green – a personal interest in Minute 80 (Questions) due to his employment;

Councillor Harry Smith – a prejudicial interest in Minute 84 (Adult Social Care – Public Interest Disclosure) due to her involvement in the matter at appeal stage; and

Councillor Ann McLachlan declared a personal interest in behalf of all Labour Group Members with membership of Joint Management Committees.

71 **PETITIONS**

In accordance with Standing Order 21, the Mayor received petitions submitted by –

(a) Councillor John Hale on behalf of 1025 residents of Hoylake and West Kirby against closure of local libraries;

(b) Councillor John Hale on behalf of 186 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Hoylake Library;

(c) Councillor Lesley Rennie on behalf of 866 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Wallasey Village Library;

- (d) Councillor Lesley Rennie on behalf of 1323 signatories objecting to proposals to close Guinea Gap Recreation Centre and Woodchurch Leisure Centre and to transfer Leasowe Leisure Centre to a trust;
- (e) Councillor Sheila Clarke on behalf of 634 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Higher Bebington Library;
- (f) Councillor Andrew Hodson on behalf of 2146 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Pensby Library;
- (g) Councillor Leah Fraser on behalf of 2720 signatories objecting to the withdrawal of school crossing patrols generally, and specifically those at Liscard, Somerville, Sandbrook and Our Lady of Lourdes Primary Schools;
- (h) Councillor Leah Fraser on behalf of 114 signatories objecting to the proposed closure of Guinea Gap Recreation Centre;
- (i) Councillor Leah Fraser on behalf of 5304 signatories objecting to the proposed closure of Guinea Gap Recreation Centre;
- (j) Councillor Peter Johnson on behalf of 273 signatories objecting to the proposed withdrawal of school crossing patrols from Rocky Lane/Dee View Road and Thurstaston Road/Herbert's Lane, Heswall;
- (k) Councillor Cherry Povall on behalf of 3591 signatories objecting to the proposed closure of Bromborough Library and Civic Centre;
- (l) Councillor Pat Williams on behalf of 241 signatories objecting to the withdrawal of the school crossing patrol at Holm Lane, Oxton, near to junction with Overton Way;
- (m) Councillor Chris Blakeley on behalf of 213 residents objecting to the possible use of Irby Quarry as landfill site;
- (n) Councillor Tom Anderson on behalf of 1448 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Upton Library;
- (o) Councillor Tom Anderson on behalf of 262 signatories objecting to the withdrawal of school crossing patrol at St Michael and All Angels Primary School;
- (p) Councillor Tom Anderson on behalf of 1934 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Grange Road West Sports Centre;
- (q) Councillor Tom Anderson on behalf of 1295 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Irby Library;
- (r) Councillor Tom Anderson on behalf of 4140 signatories objecting to the proposal to close Woodchurch Leisure Centre;
- (s) Councillor Moira McLaughlin on behalf of 80 signatories requesting improved street lighting in Egerton Park; and

(t) Councillor Gerry Ellis on behalf of 123 signatories objecting to planning application no. 20086821 (Aldi retail store, Bridge Road, West Kirby).

Resolved - That the petitions be noted and referred to the appropriate chief officer and/or agency in accordance with Standing Order 34.

72 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 3rd November 2008 had been circulated to members and it was –

Resolved – that, subject to the amendment of Minute 50 (Petitions) – paragraph (h) to read:

“Councillor Andrew Hodson on behalf of 240 signatories requesting the introduction of “Twenty’s Plenty” (20mph) restrictions on Thurstaston and Village Roads, Heswall;”

the minutes be approved and adopted as a correct record.

73 PROCEDURE

Councillor Ann McLachlan moved the following motion, duly seconded –

“That Standing Order 11 be waived in order that the 30 minute time limit for public questions can be extended to enable all questions submitted to be heard, but that supplementary questions be not considered”.

Councillor Jeff Green moved an amendment, duly seconded –

“That Standing Order 11 be waived in order that the 30 minute time limit for public questions can be extended to enable all questions submitted to be heard and that supplementary questions be allowed.”

The amendment was put and it was –

Resolved – That Standing Order 11 be waived in order that the 30 minute time limit for public questions can be extended to enable all questions submitted to be heard and that supplementary questions be allowed.

74 CABINET MINUTE 254 - PROJECTED BUDGET 2009-11 (6 NOVEMBER 2008)

Resolved - That

(1) in the light of the continued urgent need to close Wirral’s £21million budget gap and avoid placing an unreasonable burden on Wirral’s council tax payers, and in the light of the recommendations on Item 4 (Progress towards the Transformation of Adult Social Services) and Item 8 (Procurement Efficiencies), the following matters be approved:

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES	
	£
In line with Cabinet report on item 4, paragraph 13.2, adopt the Fair Price model of Supported Living with Independent Supported Living Providers.	650,000
In line with Cabinet report item 4 paragraph 13.3 put in house Supported Living Services out to tender. This is a half year saving from September 09 to allow time for process.	347,000
In line with Cabinet report item 4 paragraph 7.2 put all Adult Social Services Transport services out to tender. This is a part year saving to allow time for the process.*	180,000
In line with Cabinet report item 4 paragraph 14.1.d) fund the cost of Individualised Budgets from Reform Care Grant	1,500,000
Fund the Reform Team directly from the Efficiency Investment Budget in 2008/9	360,000
Fund Reform Team from Efficiency Investment Budget in 2009/10	518,000
FINANCE	
	£
Fund Change team from Efficiency Investment Fund in 2008/9	635,000
Fund Change team from Efficiency Investment Fund in 2009/10	635,000
Fund Procurement and Creditors from Efficiency Investment Fund in 2008/9	1,022,000
Fund Procurement and Creditors from Efficiency Investment Fund in 2009/10	1,022,000
Fund Customer Services Development from Efficiency Investment Fund	183,000
Fund Customer Services Development from Efficiency Investment Fund	183,000
Corporate Procurement Efficiencies	1,500,000

REGENERATION.	
	£
Conference and Seminar Attendance	10,000
Reduction in Training	28,000
Maximising external grant	107,000
Reduction in advertising as a consequence of Wirral Homes' decision to stop advertising in the Globe (Council's contribution no longer required)*	10,000
Review of administration.	138,000

* see also Minutes 94 and 96 below.

75 **CABINET MINUTE 267 - PROJECTED BUDGET 2009-11 (27 NOVEMBER 2008)**

Resolved – That

(1) it be recognised that the recession is having an impact on many of Wirral's families and it is essential to do everything possible to ensure that Wirral's council tax payers are not faced with the additional burden of high council tax increases. In order to further reduce Wirral's budget gap, and in the light of the reports and Cabinet recommendations on the Insurance Budget (Item 15), the Highway and Engineering Services Procurement Exercise (Item 9), and the Reconfiguration of Youth Services (Item 16), the following matters be approved:

CHILDREN'S SERVICES	
	£
The Schools budget be charged with the full cost of insurance, reflecting the risks assessed by the insurer and that the mechanism for doing this is agreed with the Schools' Forum.	400,000
The Reconfiguration of the Youth Service is agreed in line with the report and consequential savings accepted as outlined in the recommendation*	150,000

TECHNICAL SERVICES	
	£
The revenue savings of £320,000 arising from the HESPE exercise as outlined in the report be accepted.	320,000
FINANCE.	
	£
The sum of £140,000 of increased income from Wirral Partnership Homes following the closure of their cash offices be accepted.	140,000

* see also Minute 92 below.

76 **CABINET MINUTE 270 - CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE (27 NOVEMBER 2008)**

Resolved - That:

- (1) the Council Tax Base for 2009/10 be approved; and
- (2) in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the figure calculated by this Authority as its Council Tax Base for the year 2009/10 shall be 104,276.

77 **CABINET MINUTE 295 - PROJECTED BUDGET 2009-11 (10 DECEMBER 2008)**

Resolved -

- (1) it be recognised that there is an urgent need to ensure that Council Tax increases are kept as low as possible and therefore the following savings be approved, in order to continue to narrow Wirral's budget gap and protect Wirral residents from unnecessary financial burdens.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES	
	£
Deletion of posts held vacant for more than twelve months	80,000
Cease to provide uniform grants in the light of ready availability of inexpensive school clothing.*	30,000

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES	
Reduction in Residential and Nursing Home Fees Contract in line with agenda item 25	1,000,000
Review of Admin Support	100,000
HOUSING AND REGENERATION	
Increase mobile cleaning team to facilitate mobile cleaning of all toilets at regular intervals.	70,000
CORPORATE SERVICES	
Restore element of LAA reward grant to Council budget following decision of Local Area Agreement Board on November 19th.	1,400,000
FINANCE.	
Transfer of Reserves and Provisions no longer required to the General Fund, with the proviso that £230,000 is set against the projected Housing and Regeneration overspend on Cultural Services.	360,000

* see also Minute 98 below.

78 **CABINET MINUTE 296 - CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND FINANCING (10 DECEMBER 2008)**

Resolved - That

- (1) the programme for 2009/12, including the new submissions detailed in section 7.2.1 of the report be agreed; and
- (2) the capital financing requirements be reflected in the Projected Budget.

79 **CABINET MINUTE 312 - BUDGETARY ISSUES (TECHNICAL SERVICES) 2008/09 (10 DECEMBER 2008)**

Resolved - That

- (1) the Council be recommended that the current re-engineered 2008-2009 budget detailed in Appendix 1 be agreed, which reflects the virements contained within paragraph 2.2 of the Cabinet report
- (2) the revised charges detailed in paragraph 5.8 which should generate an additional £50,000 per annum;

- (3) **the actions being taken in respect of infrastructure assets be noted and the proposal to capitalise an additional £500,000 of highways maintenance expenditure be agreed as detailed in paragraph 7 and used to address the shortfalls identified in paragraph.8.1; and**
- (4) **the proposal contained in paragraph 8.1 be noted and the Director of Technical Services explore ways of containing the 2008-2009 deficit within existing resources and report further on the position for 2009-2010 early in the new financial year.**

80 QUESTIONS

(a) Mr Norman Haslehurst, 3 Hillam Road, Wallasey, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

“As a member of the public, I wish to put the following question to the relevant Cabinet Member:

If the proposal to close Guinea Gap and Woodchurch Centres is approved, apart from the many activities involved, I estimate that approximately 800 school children participate in the curriculum lessons each week and a further 900 children undertake private lessons each week.

Where will all these activities be catered for?”

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

Clearly Guinea Gap is used for primary school swimming. This year the pattern of use has changed in that schools have two week blocks where they have a 30 minute session every day for those two weeks each term. Each school decides which year group(s) to take. This concentrated pattern of allocation to schools is meant to be more effective at getting non-swimmers started than the previously weekly sessions.

There are 16 primary schools and two special schools using the pool this term, some local and some from quite a distance e.g. Bidston Avenue and Oxton St Saviour’s.

If Guinea Gap was not available then school swimming could be re-located to other pools. This would be likely to include some additional transport costs for the small number of schools who currently walk to the pool. There would also probably need to be a reduction in public swimming times at the remaining pools if the current pattern of school swimming was to be maintained.

(b) Mr Peter Dickinson, Chair of West Wallasey Village Residents Group, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

“Has the Council in its deliberations actually assessed by cost/benefit analysis precisely what the Wallasey Village branch library provides to the Wallasey Village area, in terms of either:

its role as a social lifeline across the whole spectrum of the community, embracing all age groups from very young infants to the elderly population, making it in effect a community centre in its own right;

the wide range of services it provides, such as pre-school age toddlers attending story-time classes, primary school children borrowing books and using computers and older citizens not only borrowing books but also engaging in enjoyable and much anticipated social activities organised and provided by the pro-active and innovative library staff; or

its accessibility to those residents with health/mobility problems who would find negotiating the journey to Earlston Road library or the proposed Liscard new library site, a major, if not insurmountable problem?"

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

The council is grateful for all views expressed in response to consultation on the strategic asset review. These will be considered in finalising the way forward.

The asset review recognises the diverse nature of the council's estate and the age of many of its properties. Since properties such as Wallasey Village library were built service provision has changed and the costs and economics of service delivery have become far more complex. The asset review is intended to match the estate to modern service needs.

The council is aware of the services and benefits provided through all its libraries. It intends to develop and enhance these services through fewer but better facilities, and to protect those services by ensuring they are sustainable.

Libraries are one element in a network of facilities within local communities from which activities are provided. Not all of these facilities are owned or need to be owned by the council. Pre-school children will access 'story time' type activities through playgroups, nurseries, children's centres and other similar places. All local primary schools have computers to support learning. Activities for adults will also be provided through a range of other facilities which may be owned by the council, its partners, the voluntary sector, clubs and societies and the private sector.

Whilst Wallasey Village residents would have to travel further to a library the distances involved are reasonable (1.04 miles from Wallasey Village library to Earlston Road or approximately 1.03 miles to central Liscard). At its meeting on 27th November 2008 the council's Cabinet agreed that the provision of a mobile library/one stop shop be agreed in principle and subjected to consultation. Such provision may assist residents with health/mobility problems.

Mr Dickinson asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(c) Eric G Johnson (Chair of Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse), having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

"Our overall high-speed assessment of the paper under discussion is that it is a mix of common-sense and necessity.

The concerns of 'The Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse' are over the future of heritage assets - and ours is just one - which have hardly been touched upon - only a mention of the Priory in Birkenhead.

Given the implication from the paper that the Community Fund could not sustain such buildings and the groups who promote them, then these heritage assets all face demolition, which cannot be right.

Is this the reality, or is there more 'thinking' to be done?"

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

I welcome your positive comments concerning the Strategic Asset Review. Officers are working with the Wirral History and Heritage Association and other organisations to identify options for the future management of the heritage assets included in the review. A key part of the implementation of the review will be transitional arrangements to ensure proposals can be fully developed.

Mr Johnson asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(d) Heather Butler, 5 Shortfield Way, Upton (Upton Library Users Group), having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

"Appendix 1 of the Assessment of Current Library Services in Wirral described Upton Library as 'average and stable'. Why is this building threatened with closure given that:

it is an outstanding example of 1930's Art Deco architecture;
it has served the community for over 70 years;
Upton Library is the soul of a growing community and is a place for READING;
the Birkenhead Advertiser in September 1936 described the building as '.... an addition to the architectural assets of Upton and the district generally'?"

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

The council is grateful for all views expressed in response to consultation on the strategic asset review. These will be considered in finalising the way forward.

The asset review recognises the diverse nature of the council's estate and the age of many of its properties. Since properties such as Wallasey Village library were built service provision has changed and the costs and economics of service delivery have become far more complex. The asset review is intended to match the estate to modern service needs.

The council is aware of the services and benefits provided through all its libraries. It intends to develop and enhance these services through fewer but better facilities, and to protect those services by ensuring they are sustainable.

Libraries are one element in a network of facilities within local communities from which activities are provided. Not all of these facilities are owned or need to be

owned by the council. Pre-school children will access 'story time' type activities through playgroups, nurseries, children's centres and other similar places. All local primary schools have computers to support learning. Activities for adults will also be provided through a range of other facilities which may be owned by the council, its partners, the voluntary sector, clubs and societies and the private sector.

Whilst Wallasey Village residents would have to travel further to a library the distances involved are reasonable (1.04 miles from Wallasey Village library to Earlston Road or approximately 1.03 miles to central Liscard). At its meeting on 27th November 2008 the council's Cabinet agreed that the provision of a mobile library/one stop shop be agreed in principle and subjected to consultation. Such provision may assist residents with health/mobility problems.

Ms Butler asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(e) Jean Taylor, Chairperson, Peninsular Group of Swimming Clubs, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

"If the proposed swimming pool closures go ahead, what criteria will be used to divide the available water time at the remaining pools between the various user groups, so that no one loses out?"

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

Wirral has a very good level of provision of swimming facilities and, whilst the proposals will reduce the number of pools run by Wirral Council, we will be working with swimming clubs, schools and others to accommodate as wide a range of users as possible. Priority will be given to ensuring that all schools are accommodated at their nearest pool. Officers have met with the Peninsular Group of Clubs and further meetings will be necessary.

Ms Taylor asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(f) David Barke, 9 Dale Hey, Wallasey (Chief Coach of Wallasey Swimming Club), having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

"In relation to the proposed closure of Guinea Gap Sports Centre, and bearing in mind that no contact was made with Wallasey Swimming Club as a user group by the Consultants to discuss this matter, can I ask this question, which is in three parts:

Has any costing comparison been undertaken between keeping the current facilities and the building and running costs of providing new ones?

Can you guarantee that all options will be considered, as these facilities provide a very important service in terms of health and social inclusion and, most vitally, are easily accessible to local council tax paying residents?

Where, and how, will the 420 children on swimming lessons at Guinea Gap, the 17 schools involved and the 91.5 hours of public swimming be accommodated?"

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

This is essentially the same answer as that for Mr Haslehurst (the first questioner). Clearly Guinea Gap is used for primary school swimming. This year the pattern of use has changed in that schools have two week blocks where they have a 30 minute session every day for those two weeks each term. Each school decides which year group(s) to take. This concentrated pattern of allocation to schools is meant to be more effective at getting non-swimmers started than the previously weekly sessions.

There are 16 primary schools and two special schools using the pool this term, some local and some from quite a distance e.g. Bidston Avenue and Oxton St Saviour's.

If Guinea Gap was not available then school swimming could be re-located to other pools. This would be likely to include some additional transport costs for the small number of schools who currently walk to the pool. There would also probably need to be a reduction in public swimming times at the remaining pools if the current pattern of school swimming was to be maintained.

Mr Barke asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(g) Brian Kendall, 30 Claremount Road, Wallasey, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

With reference to council minute 140 ("Mersey tunnel tolls") of 21 April 2008, what progress has been made on the following sections:

"(2)(iv) asking Council officers to liaise with Merseytravel to investigate the introduction of a discounted scheme (for) residents of Wirral and Liverpool;

(2)(v) asking Wirral's four Labour MPs to support this Notice of Motion and actively lobby the Government."

Councillor Jean Quinn responded as follows:

Council notes that the Government's new Transport Bill has now received Royal Assent and an important aspect of the Bill is a requirement for city regions to review governance arrangements in relation to transport with a view to introducing a new city region Integrated Transport Authority or ITA. All Merseyside Leaders are committed to the review of the sub-region's governance arrangements for transport and it is likely that a new city region ITA will be established in the near future.

It is anticipated that key strategic decisions in relation to transport, including policy on tunnel and bridge tolls, will fall under the remit of the new ITA and it is proposed that officers from the Council will work with officers from Merseytravel once the new ITA is established to consider this issue.

The then Acting Monitoring Officer and Proper Officer wrote to Wirral's four MPs individually to draw their attention to this issue. However no written response was received.

Mr Kendall asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Jean Quinn responded accordingly.

(h) Keith Lewis, on behalf of The Warren Golf Club, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

“Being aware that the Strategic Area Review is taking up a lot of people’s time within the Council and has produced many issues that need to be addressed, can I highlight two important matters and enquire as to their future:

The proposed disposal of The Grange function facility – it is currently home to The Warren Golf Club, so what is proposed for its future location?

The proposed closure of Guinea Gap baths – what will be the impact on the area and on its community, particularly in terms of the availability of alternative facilities?”

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

In respect of The Grange, adjacent to the Warrens Golf Course, any further discussions on the disposal of properties will include consultation with existing tenants, and the Authority will comply with any landlord obligations. We would be happy to consider any proposals from the clubs who presently occupy the building.

The impact of the proposed closure of Guinea Gap Baths is recognised. However, Wirral has a very good level of provision of swimming facilities and, whilst the proposals will reduce the number of pools run by Wirral Council, the provision will still be comparable to similar local authorities in England and Wales.

Mr Lewis asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

(i) Allan Malden, Clifton Lodge, Withens Lane, Wallasey, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

“With regard to the fact that the Council has decided to remove a number of school crossing patrols, including the patrols at Liscard Primary School, what value does the Council put on a child’s life?”

Councillor Jean Quinn responded as follows:

Good evening Mr Malden. I realise that you specifically want some details about School Crossing Patrols but as you have asked your question in more general terms I will make some other comments first and come to the school crossing patrols a little later if I may.

“What value does the Council put on a child's life?”

I think we all believe that a child’s life is priceless and those of us who have make decisions on behalf of the whole Borough must have that constantly in our minds. We take our responsibilities for the development, health and safety of children very seriously indeed. We have to make decisions which give the best possible outcomes to as many children as possible from maintaining school crossing patrols where they are most needed to protecting children who are at risk in many other situations.

Since the decision to remove school crossing patrol attendants from 18 schools was been made many people have said to me, "It is only £50,000 is it worth it?" I put a question to you – would it be worth keeping school crossing patrols where they are not needed and then take an extra £50,000 from somewhere else for example Children's Services –a possible whole social worker at the time when we are all in shock over the baby P case?

Within a finite budget this is the kind of decision that we face. This is complicated even further by the fact that we have a statutory responsibility to provide some services for example Children's Services, Social Services but provision of school crossing patrols is not our statutory responsibility. Having said that we do provide the service and I value the work of our 113 school crossing patrol staff and the contribution they make to road safety.

However it is only right that the Council apply objective criteria in determining where school crossing patrols should be provided. Clearly, priority must be given to where significant pupil numbers need to cross hazardous roads. Because of changing patterns in school attendance and falling rolls, the location of some crossing points does need to be addressed.

I know Mr Maldon that you are essentially raising concerns about the removal of a School Crossing Patrol service from 18 schools and in particular from Liscard Primary School.

Bearing this in mind let me explain to you what has happened and where we are at now. The criteria we have been using so far are recommended by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA); these are a combination of the number of children crossing and the number of vehicles. They are recommended guidelines and are used by many Councils across the Country when making decisions about where school crossing patrols should go. In Wirral all 113 crossings were subject to this calculation routinely and 18 fell below the recommended lower limit.

Since the decision was taken schools and staff have been contacted as part of a consultation. In addition many parents have contacted me direct to express their concerns.

As of last Wednesday the position is as follows:

Of the 18 schools:

9 have said they do not feel it necessary to continue with the crossing patrol either because it is redundant or they wish to consider other road safety options.

5 schools have significant problems with the proposal and are organising petitions etc.

One school is considering alternative funding options.

The others have not made a decision yet because governing bodies have not had a chance to discuss the matter.

Of the parents that have contacted me their concerns have mostly not been about the school crossing patrol itself but about other road safety issues e.g. speeding traffic and dangerous or selfish parking.

Some parents have said that the removal of school crossing patrols will encourage more parents to drive their children to school with its obvious health and environmental problems. One of my responses has to be that if fewer parents drove their children to school it would be safer and healthier and the numbers of children crossing might well increase above the threshold for a school crossing patrol.

I have asked for further assessments of the traffic conditions and road layout etc in relation to the 5 schools where concerns have been expressed. This will inform any future decision and may well result in other actions being taken like speeding enforcement and introduction or extension of traffic regulation orders around the schools. I would also like to take this opportunity to reassure parents that the Council is strongly committed to creating safe walking routes to school.

Thus it has been possible to achieve some savings to help with the over stretched Council budget at the same time as potentially putting more appropriate road safety measures into place.

In addition the Council has invested over half a million pounds in puffin crossings and two and a half million pounds in other road safety measures over the past three years across large parts of the Borough. As a result Wirral's previous poor record has been turned around, road accident statistics have gone down in the last two years and the number of children who are killed or seriously injured on Wirral roads has fallen from 37 in 2005 to 23 in 2007/8.

You will also note that there is an amendment to a motion on this subject going before Council this evening which asks officers to develop a new policy for undertaking a risk assessment of school crossings and report back to Cabinet in the next six months.

Mr Malden asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Jean Quinn responded accordingly.

(j) Councillor Bill Duffey, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted the following question:

“What is the rationale behind the closure of Guinea Gap Baths a facility that works whose activities are not easily transported unlike say those at Solar Campus a facility that is being retained, is well used and provides the learning of a life skill, encourages health and fitness, and gives pleasure and leisure?”

Councillor Bob Moon responded as follows:

The rationale can be found in item 31 of the Cultural Services Development Plan. We have unsustainable net costs, which are aggravated by increasing budgetary pressures, particularly energy. The recommendation is for better but fewer facilities, accessible to the whole community of Wirral, improving the quality of facilities and service delivery. The Solar Campus is retained subject to the Office Accommodation Review and will therefore be included in a future report.

Councillor Duffey asked a supplementary question to which Councillor Bob Moon responded accordingly.

81 **MATTERS FOR NOTING**

Resolved: That the following matters be noted, as required by the Constitution:

(i) Cabinet minute 278 (27 November) – Chancellor’s pre-Budget Statement – Change in VAT (Reason: waiving of call-in);

(ii) Cabinet minute 282 (27 November) – Update on Contractual Position in respect of Nursing Homes (Reason: waiving of call-in).

(iii) Cabinet minute 304 (10 December) – Financial Recommendations of the Mersey Waterfront Regional Partnership Board (Reason: waiving of call-in).

82 **MATTERS REFERRED FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Resolved: That the references from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

83 **MATTERS FOR DEBATE**

The matters listed for debate in accordance with Standing Order 5(1)(I) were dealt with as indicated in minutes 84 to 96 below.

84 **ADULT SOCIAL CARE - PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management advised the Council that it would be appropriate to defer consideration of this matter to a future meeting.

Resolved – That the matter be deferred to a future appropriate meeting.

85 **PROCEDURE**

It was moved by Councillor Ann McLachlan, duly seconded, that the procedure in Standing Order 7(8) be applied at 8.30pm with the proviso that the debate be finished by 9pm..

Following a debate, the motion was put and it was -

Resolved (41:24) – That the procedure in Standing Order 7(8) be applied at 8.30pm with the proviso that the debate be finished by 9pm.

86 **STRATEGIC ASSET REVIEW**

The Council agreed without a vote to consider this matter and the following notice of motion as a joint debate.

Proposed by Councillor Green
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Rennie

(1) Council believes:

that the mark of a just and fair society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens and that local authorities have an important role to play in encouraging aspiration, healthy living and community spirit.

(2) Council notes:

(a) that 2008 is the National Year of Reading, a year-long celebration of reading, in all its forms, to increase awareness of the many values of reading – anything, any time, any place – for children, families and adult learners alike;

(b) that wards such as Upton, Seacombe, Bidston & St James and Leasowe & Moreton East, have below-average numbers of pupils who achieve L2 or better at Key Stage 1 for reading compared with the national average;

(c) that remarks by Andy Burnham [Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport] in July that the Government wishes local authorities to expand participation in swimming, in particular for the over-60s and under-16s, in their local communities and that £35 million was made available to modernise public swimming pool provision;

(d) that many leisure centres offer valuable alternative activities for young people to shine and achieve their full potential;

(e) that the programmes offered by local libraries and community and leisure centres reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour in areas and communities that have no other source of activity;

(f) that many community centres rely on a small and dedicated team of volunteers who in turn rely on the Council to provide and oversee professional support for maintenance, insurance, budgets, personnel and health and safety.

(3) Council welcomes:

the enactment of the Sustainable Communities Act in October 2008 to reverse the decline in local communities and neighbourhoods affected by the large-scale withdrawal of services and amenities.

(4) Council therefore:

(a) does not support the approval of the Cabinet to close libraries, leisure centres, museums and theatres;

(b) does not support the proposal to withdraw Council funding from community centres forcing their closure or demolition if they cannot find alternative funding within two years;

(c) believes that fundamental changes to the Wirral wide provision of services by the Council should have electoral support and, as such support for these proposals has not been demonstrated at the ballot box, a Wirral-wide referendum should be held before any decision for the wholesale closure of libraries, leisure centres, community centres, museums and theatres is implemented;

(d) believes that, if our local services are as derelict and starved of investment as the Leader of the Council claims, he is accountable and should accept his responsibility for this by submitting his resignation to the Council.

Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(3):

Proposed by Councillor Holbrook
Seconded by Councillor Moon

Delete paragraph (4) and replace with:

(4) Council therefore

(a) welcomes the Cabinet's commitment to invest £20m in modernising Council facilities to provide high quality services in fewer, more modern and appropriate buildings; and the commitment to consult and engage with the community in the design and development of these improved facilities;

(b) welcomes the opportunity arising from the Strategic Asset Review for the increased community ownership of their own assets and the greater opportunities that flow from asset ownership;

(c) welcomes the wider engagement of partners from the other parts of the public sector and the benefits from co-location of services and closer working arrangements;

(d) acknowledges the concerns raised by members of the public and that these representations will be considered; notes that no final decision has yet been taken; recognises that whilst some changes will not be welcome, best endeavours will be used to ensure that, when buildings have to close, valued community activities are provided where this is practicable;

(e) notes that the asset review will deliver better value for money to the council taxpayer; avoiding an additional £45 million pounds in running costs over the next ten years; and will bring about long term sustainability in Wirral's services provision.

Following a debate, the amendment was put and carried, with the Council dividing as follows:

For the amendment (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggin, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and P Williams.

Against the amendment (24) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Abstainers (2) – Councillors A Jones and D Kirwan.

The substantive motion was put and carried with the Council dividing as follows:

For the motion (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggin, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and P Williams.

Against the Motion (24) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Abstainers (2) – Councillors A Jones and D Kirwan.

Resolved – That

(1) Council believes:

that the mark of a just and fair society is how it treats its most vulnerable citizens and that local authorities have an important role to play in encouraging aspiration, healthy living and community spirit.

(2) Council notes:

(a) that 2008 is the National Year of Reading, a year-long celebration of reading, in all its forms, to increase awareness of the many values of reading – anything, any time, any place – for children, families and adult learners alike;

(b) that wards such as Upton, Seacombe, Bidston & St James and Leasowe & Moreton East, have below-average numbers of pupils who achieve L2 or better at Key Stage 1 for reading compared with the national average;

(c) that remarks by Andy Burnham [Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport] in July that the Government wishes local authorities to expand participation in swimming, in particular for the over-60s and under-16s, in their local communities and that £35 million was made available to modernise public swimming pool provision;

(d) that many leisure centres offer valuable alternative activities for young people to shine and achieve their full potential;

(e) that the programmes offered by local libraries and community and leisure centres reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour in areas and communities that have no other source of activity;

(f) that many community centres rely on a small and dedicated team of volunteers who in turn rely on the Council to provide and oversee professional support for maintenance, insurance, budgets, personnel and health and safety.

(3) Council welcomes:

the enactment of the Sustainable Communities Act in October 2008 to reverse the decline in local communities and neighbourhoods affected by the large-scale withdrawal of services and amenities.

(4) Council therefore

(a) welcomes the Cabinet's commitment to invest £20m in modernising Council facilities to provide high quality services in fewer, more modern and appropriate buildings; and the commitment to consult and engage with the community in the design and development of these improved facilities;

(b) welcomes the opportunity arising from the Strategic Asset Review for the increased community ownership of their own assets and the greater opportunities that flow from asset ownership;

(c) welcomes the wider engagement of partners from the other parts of the public sector and the benefits from co-location of services and closer working arrangements;

(d) acknowledges the concerns raised by members of the public and that these representations will be considered; notes that no final decision has yet been taken; recognises that whilst some changes will not be welcome, best endeavours will be used to ensure that, when buildings have to close, valued community activities are provided where this is practicable;

(e) notes that the asset review will deliver better value for money to the council taxpayer; avoiding an additional £45 million pounds in running costs over the next ten years; and will bring about long term sustainability in Wirral's services provision.

87 TRANSFORMING WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Foulkes
Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

(1) Council welcomes the proposal in the Strategic Asset Report to invest £20m in new or modernised multi-purpose buildings which are fit for the 21st Century.

(2) Council notes that this will be in addition to the opening on 13 December of the Floral Pavilion, as part of a £60m development in New Brighton; the opening of the Council's new, state-of-the-art, Archive Centre; the brand new secondary school to be built in Woodchurch; the major waterfront development planned by Peel Holdings; Wirral PCT's proposed new Community Health facilities at the St. Catherine's site in Birkenhead and the new primary care centre at Victoria Central Hospital in Wallasey; Wirral Metropolitan College's proposed new campus and the potential for the creation of further Higher Education facilities under the University Challenge programme.

(3) Council welcomes this progress towards the regeneration of Wirral, and the plan to use Council assets in Seacombe to kick-start regeneration in one of Wirral's poorest wards, which is in accord with the aims of the Vision for Wirral within the Corporate Plan and which will help create a more prosperous and equal Wirral that we can all take pride in.

The Council had previously debated this matter (minute 86 refers).

The motion was put and carried, with the Council dividing as follows:

For the motion (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggin, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and P Williams.

Against the Motion (24) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Abstainers (2) – Councillors A Jones and D Kirwan.

Resolved – That the motion be approved.

88 BORDERLANDS ELECTRIFICATION

Proposed by Councillor Holbrook
Seconded by Councillor Mitchell

(1) This Council notes:

its consistent support for the electrification of the Bidston to Wrexham Borderlands rail line;
the importance of the Borderlands rail line to the Wirral economy by linking the industries of Deeside with North Birkenhead, where greater employment opportunities are required;
recent Government statements on the economic downturn, particularly the need to fund public works now, in order to get people back into work when the downturn is over.

(2) Council is dismayed at the recent Network Rail estimate for the electrification and upgrade of the line of £207m and notes this is more than three times the cost estimated for this work by Merseytravel. Council is perplexed at such wildly different estimates, and requests that an independent review of costs is jointly commissioned by Network Rail and Merseytravel to establish the true cost.

(3) Council also notes the application made by Merseytravel to take control of the track of the Merseyrail Network from Network Rail. Council believes by integrating management of the infrastructure with service delivery, greater efficiencies and investment can be secured for the benefit of local people and therefore supports this proposal.

(4) Council therefore:

(i) requests that Merseytravel should now widen these discussions to include the Welsh Assembly Government and seek agreement to take ownership of the Borderlands line as part of these proposals, so that its operation can be fully integrated into the Merseyrail network;

(ii) supports the electrification of the Bidston to Wrexham Borderlands rail line being undertaken by Merseytravel, with the possibility of a 25kV overhead electrified line being considered as an alternative;

(iii) calls upon Wirral's MPs and North West MEPs to lobby the Government on these proposals on the Council's behalf.

Having applied the guillotine the Council did not debate this matter.

The motion was put and carried with the Council dividing as follows:

For the motion (62) - Councillors RL Abbey, T Anderson, A Bridson, SL Clarke, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, S Foulkes, Mrs L Fraser, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, JE Green, J Hale, T Harney, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, D Kirwan, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, S Niblock, C Povall, A Pritchard, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, Mrs LA Rennie, DE Roberts, SL Rowlands, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, Sue Taylor, CM Teggin, GCJ Watt, R Wilkins, KJ Williams, P Williams and Mrs K Wood.

Against the Motion (0) - None

Abstainers (1) – Councillor A Jones

Resolved – That the motion be approved.

89 **SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS**

Proposed by Councillor Leah Fraser
Seconded Councillor Tom Anderson

(1) This Council recognizes and applauds the invaluable work carried out by school crossing patrols, and which they continue to do, to keep our primary school children safe from accidents and death when crossing the road outside schools.

(2) This Council recognizes that the criteria for deciding whether to provide a school crossing patrol are advisory only.

(3) This Council recognizes that, if 18 school crossing patrols are removed, 23 schools will be affected and road safety around them will worsen.

(4) Council is disappointed with the lack of consultation with schools over the removal of school crossing patrols.

(5) Council believes school budgets should be spent on services within school and not used to subsidise Council responsibilities.

(6) That Council, therefore, recognizes the need for the current number of school crossing patrols to be maintained for the safety of our primary school children.

Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(3):

Proposed by Councillor Patricia Williams
Seconded by Councillor Teggin

Delete all after (2) and insert:

(3) Council believes that school budgets should be spent on services within schools' responsibilities, including supporting School Travel Plans.

(4) Council urges that a regular process of updating risk assessments of all the current and future crossing patrols should be in place, the presumption being that sites should continue to be provided unless there has been a change of circumstances in the area (such as the closure of a school removing the need, or if there is a Pelican or Puffin crossing at that site or nearby) or that the risk assessment identifies sufficient changes to warrant a review and possible discontinuation after full discussion and examination with the school(s) concerned. Risk assessments shall pay due regard to the existing RoSPA guidelines and also to issues such as road gradient, layout, traffic flows speeding, and congestion. The same criteria should be used for assessing applications for new crossing patrols.

(5) Officers be requested to develop a policy incorporating all the points raised in (4) above and present a report to the Cabinet within the next six months.
Having applied the guillotine the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment was put and carried with the Council dividing as follows:

For the amendment (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggin, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and P Williams.

Against the amendment (25) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, D Kirwan, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Abstainers (1) – Councillor A Jones.

Resolved (39:25:1) – That

(1) This Council recognizes and applauds the invaluable work carried out by school crossing patrols, and which they continue to do, to keep our primary school children safe from accidents and death when crossing the road outside schools.

(2) This Council recognizes that the criteria for deciding whether to provide a school crossing patrol are advisory only.

(3) Council believes that school budgets should be spent on services within schools' responsibilities, including supporting School Travel Plans.

(4) Council urges that a regular process of updating risk assessments of all the current and future crossing patrols should be in place, the presumption being that sites should continue to be provided unless there has been a change of circumstances in the area (such as the closure of a school removing the need, or if there is a Pelican or Puffin crossing at that site or nearby) or that the risk assessment identifies sufficient changes to warrant a review and possible discontinuation after full discussion and examination with the school(s) concerned. Risk assessments shall pay due regard to the existing RoSPA guidelines and also to issues such as road gradient, layout, traffic flows speeding, and congestion. The same criteria should be used for assessing applications for new crossing patrols.

(5) Officers be requested to develop a policy incorporating all the points raised in (4) above and present a report to the Cabinet within the next six months.

90 **PROCEDURE - SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER**

Councillor Simon Holbrook moved that Standing Order 18 (5) be suspended for the remainder of the meeting.

The motion was put with the Council dividing as follows:

For the amendment (39) - Councillors RL Abbey, A Bridson, I Coates, JA Crabtree, George Davies, PL Davies, WJ Davies, F Doyle, S Foulkes, G Gardiner, John George, PN Gilchrist, T Harney, SA Holbrook, AT Jennings, SE Kelly, Brian Kenny, DT Knowles, Ann McLachlan, M McLaughlin, CM Meaden, GD Mitchell, RK Moon, S Niblock, Jean Quinn, M Redfern, PTC Reisdorf, DE Roberts, J Salter, H Smith, PA Smith, WW Smith, PM Southwood, JV Stapleton, A Taylor, CM Teggin, R Wilkins, KJ Williams and P Williams.

Against the amendment (24) - Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Abstainers (2) – Councillors A Jones and D Kirwan.

Resolved: That Standing Order 18 (5) be suspended for the remainder of the meeting.

91 **ILLEGAL DRUGS - APPARATUS**

Proposed by Councillor Kenny
Seconded by Councillor Knowles

Council notes that the ready availability in retail outlets in Wirral and Merseyside generally of apparatus for the inhalation, ingestion and injection of illegal drugs may be hampering the national drive to reduce drug dependency and addiction. The

Chief Executive is requested to investigate, in co-operation with the Borough's crime prevention partners, the feasibility of introducing local by-laws prohibiting the sale of such apparatus.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (64:0:1) – That the motion be approved

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote in favour of the motion be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, D Kirwan, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

92 **DECLINE IN BEE POPULATION**

Proposed by Councillor Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Mitchell

(1) This Council expresses its thanks to Wirral's Environmental Health staff and to the Call Centre for its established and enlightened policy of assisting householders to understand the importance of bees.

(2) Council applauds the fact that enquirers are encouraged to contact local beekeepers for advice and are discouraged from thinking of bees as 'pests' in any way.

(3) Council notes that a series of written questions were asked in the House of Commons in May and July 2008 about declining bee numbers, colony losses and the funding of research into this serious situation.

(4) Council recognises that the British Bee Keepers Association organised a lobby of Parliament in November 2008 urging an increase in funding for research into the diseases which have led to the decline in the bee population.
http://www.britishbee.org.uk/bbka_research_campaign.php

(5) In view of this, Council asks that all Wirral's Members of Parliament be requested to pursue increasing this funding in view of the vital contribution that bees make to pollination and to sustainable agriculture.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (64:0:1) – That the motion be approved

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote in favour of the motion be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, D Kirwan, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

93 **OBJECTION: RECONFIGURATION OF THE YOUTH SERVICE (CABINET MINUTE 267 - 27 NOVEMBER 2008) (PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009-2011)**

Proposed by Councillor Sheila Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Karen Hayes

(1) Council notes that, as a consequence of this reconfiguration of the Youth Service, seven as yet unnamed Youth Centres across the Wirral will be closed, and this Council rejects the loss of amenities for our young people, especially at a time when this Labour / Liberal Democrat Administration is closing down leisure centres, libraries and the highly rated Pacific Road complex.

(2) Council should instruct the Labour/ Liberal Democrat Cabinet to come clean with both our young people and our staff and name the Youth Centres which are to be closed

(3) Council therefore does not accept the Budget saving of £150,000

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (24:39:2) – That the objection be not approved.

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote in favour of the motion be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

94 **ROAD TO DAMASCUS CONVERSION**

Proposed by Councillor Harry Smith
Seconded by Councillor Knowles

(1) This Council notes with amazement the road to Damascus conversion of the Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Wallasey to the cause of the Unions in their fight against privatisation and in the call to develop public service alternatives, as reflected in the call-in of minute 251 to the Social Care, Health and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which she signed.

(2) Cabinet further notes that this dramatic abandonment of Conservative Party ideology extended to an opposition to the open tendering of transport provision, an area of privatisation previously dear to Conservative hearts, and is accompanied by a total disregard for the financial consequences to the Council, which included an estimated 20% reduction in transport costs at a saving of £360,000 in a full year.

(3) Cabinet further notes that declared Conservative opposition to Cabinet measures which would reduce council tax levels has now reached £8.5m, which, on its own, is the equivalent of an additional 7% increase in council tax, or £96 a year on

a band D property, without taking into account any potential savings from the Strategic Asset Review.

(4) Council waits with fascination to see where the Conservative policy of total opposition to all Cabinet decisions will take them next and how high they are prepared to let council tax climb for the hard pressed residents of Wirral.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (21:24:20) – That the motion be not approved.

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote against the motion be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

95 **OBJECTION: ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSPORT (CABINET MINUTE 254 - 6 NOVEMBER 2008) (PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009-2011)**

Proposed by Councillor Watt
Seconded by Councillor Sheila Clarke

(1) Council notes that:

(i) transport service users and their carers greatly value the standard and continuity of care currently provided by the in-house team;

(ii) it is proposed to put the transport service out to tender without prior consultation with staff and without assistance for staff to produce an in-house bid;

(iii) the fairness of any tendering process has been compromised by the publication of the current in-house costing in the report to Cabinet;

(iv) the suggested saving arising from putting the transport service out to tender does not take into account the cost of compliance with TUPE regulations.

(2) Council therefore does not accept the Cabinet's recommended budget saving of £180,000.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (24:39:2) – That the objection be not approved.

NB. The following Councillors requested that their in favour of the objection be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC

Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Councillor Kirwan requested that his abstention be recorded.

96 THE ECONOMY

Proposed by Councillor Mountney
Seconded by Councillor Rowlands

(1) This Council notes the impact the current economic climate is having, and will continue to have, on Wirral businesses and residents alike.

(2) Council further notes that National Government has provided little effective direct support to local businesses and residents of the Wirral.

(3) Council requests that the Chief Executive reports to the Cabinet and relevant scrutiny committees at the earliest possible opportunity, following urgent discussions with his senior officers and Wirral businesses, on the feasibility of introducing the following measures on Wirral:

(i) Merseyside Special Investment Fund to be requested to make emergency loans available to support businesses for cash-flow purposes and not just capital or revenue expansion plans;

(ii) support for businesses on how to take up business rate relief;

(iii) that Council run a campaign to highlight the poor uptake of benefits across the Wirral, and that this Council should work with the Department of Work and Pensions to encourage the uptake of benefits, including pensions credits and income support, through the better use of our housing and council tax records;

(iv) that this Council further investigate the formation and support of a wider network of Credit Unions, the benefit of which would bring longer-term stability to both the businesses and residents of the Wirral;

(v) the establishment of a Winter Warmth Partnership (Wirral MBC, Social Care, PCT, Health Service, Fire Service). An emergency fund should be established that should step in when an individual's health is at risk. This partnership should also make referrals for benefit checks and fire safety checks through its partner members;

(vi) establish a website that promotes and advertises council contracts and encourages local companies to tender for them;

(vii) from 1 January 2009, this Council revising its payment terms from 30 days to 10 days for all small businesses that provide goods and services to the Council;

(viii) the Council consider the removal or reduction of parking charges at our shopping centres.

(4) Council further requests that officers work with local businesses and employers to ensure their needs are effectively communicated to central Government.

Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(3):

Proposed by Councillor Jean Stapleton

Seconded by Councillor Kelly

Delete all after paragraph 1 and insert:

(2) Council acknowledges the initiatives already under way to help businesses and residents during the current economic crisis:

the 'Free after Three' parking arrangements from 4 December enabling Christmas shoppers to benefit from free parking after 3.00pm every Thursday during the run-up to Christmas in shoppers' car parks in Birkenhead, Liscard, Heswall and West Kirby; along with free all-day parking on Boxing Day and New Year's Day to attract shoppers to the Christmas and New Year sales;

the "Health Through Warmth" (HTW) initiative, with which the Council has been actively involved since 2003, which operates through locally based partnerships that seek to help vulnerable people whose health is adversely affected by cold, damp living conditions, achieved by facilitating the installation of appropriate energy efficiency and heating measures (sometimes as an emergency), along with the provision of related advice and information. Clients are referred by health and other key community workers who have attended locally based awareness sessions offered by HTW;

the Fuel Poverty training seminar for members held on 21 October 2008, which brought together: Health Through Warmth; Energy Projects Plus; Firefighters from the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Community Safety Team; the Citizens' Advice Bureau and Wirral Borough Council, and agreed to further collaboration between those partners, the Primary Care Trust, and the Joint Director of Public Health, to tackle fuel poverty and health-related issues in Wirral.

(3) Council further asks the Chief Executive to ensure that:

businesses continue to be informed about how to take up business rate relief, and that such information is sent out, as normal, with the rates bills, and also given to any business struggling to pay its bills that might benefit;

the Council continues its campaign to increase the take up of benefits and works closely with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that those who are entitled to benefits receive them, including pension credits and income support;

wherever possible the Council exceeds its target of paying small businesses within thirty days, aiming to pay bills wherever possible in a much shorter timescale, and ensures that all appropriate employees are made aware that rapid payment of bills by the Council in times of recession can play a major part in ensuring a healthy cash flow for small businesses;

officers work with local businesses and employers as appropriate and ensure that their needs are effectively communicated to Central Government.

(4) Council welcomes the move by the North West Regional Development Agency to set up a special fund to assist businesses who may face difficulties in the current financial crisis.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter. The amendment was put and carried and it was –

Resolved (39:25:1) – That

(1) This Council notes the impact the current economic climate is having, and will continue to have, on Wirral businesses and residents alike.

(2) Council acknowledges the initiatives already under way to help businesses and residents during the current economic crisis:

the ‘Free after Three’ parking arrangements from 4 December enabling Christmas shoppers to benefit from free parking after 3.00pm every Thursday during the run-up to Christmas in shoppers’ car parks in Birkenhead, Liscard, Heswall and West Kirby; along with free all-day parking on Boxing Day and New Year’s Day to attract shoppers to the Christmas and New Year sales;

the “Health Through Warmth” (HTW) initiative, with which the Council has been actively involved since 2003, which operates through locally based partnerships that seek to help vulnerable people whose health is adversely affected by cold, damp living conditions, achieved by facilitating the installation of appropriate energy efficiency and heating measures (sometimes as an emergency), along with the provision of related advice and information. Clients are referred by health and other key community workers who have attended locally based awareness sessions offered by HTW;

the Fuel Poverty training seminar for members held on 21 October 2008, which brought together: Health Through Warmth; Energy Projects Plus; Firefighters from the Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service Community Safety Team; the Citizens’ Advice Bureau and Wirral Borough Council, and agreed to further collaboration between those partners, the Primary Care Trust, and the Joint Director of Public Health, to tackle fuel poverty and health-related issues in Wirral.

(3) Council further asks the Chief Executive to ensure that:

(a) businesses continue to be informed about how to take up business rate relief, and that such information is sent out, as normal, with the rates bills, and also given to any business struggling to pay its bills that might benefit;

(b) the Council continues its campaign to increase the take up of benefits and works closely with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure that those who are entitled to benefits receive them, including pension credits and income support;

(c) wherever possible the Council exceeds its target of paying small businesses within thirty days, aiming to pay bills wherever possible in a much shorter timescale, and ensures that all appropriate employees are made aware that rapid payment of bills by the Council in times of recession can play a major part in ensuring a healthy cash flow for small businesses;

(d) officers work with local businesses and employers as appropriate and ensure that their needs are effectively communicated to Central Government.

(4) Council welcomes the move by the North West Regional Development Agency to set up a special fund to assist businesses who may face difficulties in the current financial crisis.

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote against the amendment be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, D Kirwan, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

97 **OBJECTION: WIRRAL HOMES ADVERTISING (CABINET MINUTE 254 - 6 NOVEMBER 2008) (PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009-2011)**

Proposed by Councillor Blakeley
Seconded by Councillor Leah Fraser

(1) This Council notes that the Housing and Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 18 November 2008, was not aware of the proposals with regard to the Strategic Asset Review (SAR), and the potential loss of many public buildings, when it considered this budget saving.

(2) Council notes that, as a consequence of the SAR, there is potentially the loss of many locations, such as libraries, leisure centres, community centres and other public buildings that would have otherwise made available to the public the weekly Wirral Homes advert.

(3) Therefore, Council believes that those people who are looking for housing, and who rely on the Wirral Homes advertisement being freely available, will be severely disadvantaged.

(4) Council therefore does not accept the Cabinet's recommended budget saving of £10,000.

Having applied the guillotine, the Council did not debate this matter and it was –

Resolved (24:39:2) – That the objection be not approved.

NB. The following Councillors requested that their vote in favour of the objection be recorded:

Councillors T Anderson, C Blakeley, SL Clarke, WA Duffey, DM Elderton, GJ Ellis, Mrs L Fraser, JE Green, J Hale, Karen Hayes, Paul Hayes, AC Hodson, PSC Johnson, J Keeley, I Lewis, SD Moseley, SR Mountney, C Povall, A Pritchard, Mrs LA Rennie, SL Rowlands, Sue Taylor, GCJ Watt, and Mrs K Wood.

Councillor Kirwan requested that his abstention be recorded.

98 **OBJECTION: SCHOOL UNIFORMS AND TRANSPORT (CABINET MINUTE 295 – 10 DECEMBER 2008) (PROJECTED BUDGETS 2009-2011)**

Proposed by Councillor Sheila Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Karen Hayes

(1) Council notes that the removal of the uniform grant will affect the most needy in our community especially at a time of such deep financial hardship, and the grant should be retained.

(2) Council should instruct the Labour/ Liberal Democrat Cabinet to stop the further review of the cost of School transport. Parents of whatever faith have a right to choose the best school that meets not only their children's needs but also their beliefs. This Council should not be imposing barriers to this and again inflicting a further financial burden at this critical time.

(3) Council therefore does not accept the budget saving of £30,000 and agrees that a further review of the cost of school transport should not take place.

Resolved: That the matter be referred to the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee (minute 77 above refers).

99 **VACANCIES**

There were no nominations to vacancies submitted.

100 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.