

# COUNCIL

Monday, 11 February 2013

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Gerry Ellis) in the Chair  
Deputy Mayor (Councillor Dave Mitchell)

Councillors	C Blakeley	S Hodrien	D Realey
	E Boulton	A Hodson	L Rennie
	A Brighthouse	K Hodson	D Roberts
	W Clements	M Hornby	L Rowlands
	A Cox	M Johnston	J Salter
	J Crabtree	AER Jones	H Smith
	G Davies	C Jones	T Smith
	P Davies	P Kearney	W Smith
	WJ Davies	S Kelly	J Stapleton
	D Dodd	B Kenny	M Sullivan
	P Doughty	A Leech	A Sykes
	S Foulkes	I Lewis	J Walsh
	L Fraser	AR McLachlan	G Watt
	P Gilchrist	M McLaughlin	S Whittingham
	P Glasman	C Meaden	J Williamson
	JE Green	B Mooney	I Williams
	R Gregson	S Mountney	KJ Williams
	P Hackett	C Muspratt	P Williams
	J Hale	S Niblock	S Williams
	T Harney	T Norbury	
	P Hayes	C Povall	

Apologies Councillors RL Abbey D Elderton

## 103 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Geoffrey Watt declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to Motion 6 – ‘Healthy Homes’ and the Case for Selective Licensing of the Private Rented Sector (see minute 118 post) by virtue of him being a private landlord.

## 104 MAYOR'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor's Chaplain, Revd Dr David Chester, led the Council in prayers.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ron Abbey and David Elderton. The Mayor was pleased to inform the Council that Councillor Elderton continued to make good progress in hospital and the best wishes of the Council had been sent to him.

The Mayor also advised that, with the three party leaders, he had hosted a reception for the family of Corporal Albert Laver, one of the ‘Cockleshell Heroes’ recently honoured at a ceremony in Birkenhead to commemorate their courage during World War 2.

## 105 PETITIONS

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

- (i). Councillor Cherry Povall on behalf of 690 signatories, calling on Wirral Council to preserve the Heritage Transport Museum as a vital, irreplaceable part of Wirral's heritage.
- (ii). Councillor Harry Smith on behalf of 144 signatories expressing support for the St James' Centre, Birkenhead.
- (iii). Councillor Tony Smith on behalf of 27 signatories requesting the provision of alleygating to prevent unauthorised access to the rear of properties to the rear of Arrowe Park Road, Upton.
- (iv). Councillor Mark Johnston on behalf of 65 signatories objecting to the Licensing Application for Seven Acres Garage, Pensby to extend its alcohol sales conditions.
- (v). Councillor Mark Johnston on behalf of 117 signatories requesting the Council to restore security lighting at the car park on Fishers Lane, Pensby.
- (vi). Councillor Geoffrey Watt on behalf of 282 signatories calling on the Council to enforce the removal of the "Green Goddess" auxiliary fire service vehicles that are permanently parked outside a private house in Ennisdale Drive, West Kirby.
- (vii). Councillor Ian Lewis on behalf of 571 signatories who oppose plans to issue iPads to Members of the Council.
- (viii). Councillor Steve Niblock on behalf of 1631 signatures against the closure of Bebington/New Ferry Youth Club as a result of budget cuts.

The Council's Petition Scheme states that if a petition contains more than 1500 signatures, the petition organiser should be invited to present the petition to the Council for no longer than five minutes, prior to the matter being debated by the Council for a maximum of 15 minutes before deciding how to respond to the petition.

**Resolved – That the petitions be noted and referred to the appropriate Chief Officers in accordance with Standing Order 34.**

## 106 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 17 December 2012 and 28 January 2013 had been circulated to Members and, it was –

**Resolved – That the minutes be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

## 107 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Davies, addressed the Council on the following matters:

- **Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust**

The Leader referred to the shocking report published last week by Mr Robert Francis QC, which found serious failings in the quality hospital care provided by Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. He expressed sorrow and concern for the families and friends of those affected and highlighted the importance of key partners in Wirral examining the report findings to determine whether any actions were required to ensure that no such failings happened in Wirral.

Although there was no suggestion of any issues concerning the quality of hospital care provided in Wirral, he proposed as a matter of urgency that, in order to uphold the highest possible standards of care, a proactive approach be taken to recognise and deal with service failures before things go badly wrong, as happened in Mid-Staffs –

- (i). As Chair of Wirral's Health and Well Being Board, he would be seeking an urgent meeting to discuss the key issues from the Francis Report and to ask the Clinical Commissioning Group to present a report on their governance and monitoring arrangements; to include input from Healthwatch, in relation to their new role and how it would act as an early warning system.
- (ii). He proposed also to write to the Chair of the Council's Health and Well Being O&S Committee to suggest that a similar discussion takes place and that the Committee consider the establishment of a 'Task and Finish' group to ascertain in detail the suitability of governance and monitoring arrangements.

- **New Affordable Homes**

He was pleased to announce that, under "Housing 21" proposals and following initial consultation with residents, new affordable homes were to be built in Seacombe Ward, on the site of the former Poulton House.

- **Allotments**

At a time of rapidly increasing food prices and high demand for allotments, he reported that the newly established "Leasowe Community Allotment Society" would take a 25 year 'peppercorn' lease from the Council for a parcel of land on the former site of Leasowe Primary School. The site would provide 29 individual full, half and quarter size allotment plots, a communal allotment area, picnic areas and a communal orchard. The Society's aim was to develop a thriving, attractive and multifunctional allotment site that benefited plot-holders, visitors, the local community and wildlife.

- **Rogue Trading**

Wirral Trading Standards had recently obtained its first Anti-Social Behaviour Order against a rogue trader at Wirral Magistrates' Court. The person in question had been found guilty of offences of fraud and aggressive trade practices and was made subject of the Order and was also sentenced to five months imprisonment, disqualified from driving for 18 months and was ordered to pay costs of £2,300 and £95 compensation for the re-bedding of roof tiles after the incident.

- **Prenton High School**

He was pleased to announce that the Headteacher of Prenton High School had received a letter from the Rt Hon David Laws MP, Minister of State for Schools, congratulating the school on its success for being in the top 100 secondary schools in England for educational excellence. He had expressed the thanks and congratulations of the Council to the Headteachers, Governors, staff and pupils of Prenton High School for their tremendous achievement.

- **New Housing Development**

A total of 155 new homes were to be built on the site of the former St Benedict's School at Woodchurch. The development was a partnership between social housing provider Wirral Partnership Homes and Mansell Construction. WPH would own 131 of the properties to be rented out, whilst the rest would be sold by Mansell. The first sod had been cut during a special ceremony attended by local Councillors Stuart Whittingham and Tony Smith. He indicated that the development was the biggest housing development in the North West and was excellent news for Wirral.

## 108 **MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE COUNCIL**

In accordance with Standing Order 7(1), a number of matters were submitted for approval by the Council.

One matter from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24 January 2013 (minute 170 – Neighbourhood Working) was submitted for approval but was the subject of two objections (see minutes 120 and 121 post).

A further item from the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 February 2013 (minute 186 – Nomination of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Municipal Year 2013/2014) required approval by the Annual Meeting of the Council and, as such, was for noting.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan, it was –

**Resolved –**

**(1) That the following matters be approved:**

- (i). Minute 156 (Cabinet – 20 December 2012)  
Local Development Framework – Annual Monitoring Reports**
- (ii). Minute 171 (Cabinet – 24 January 2013)  
Budget Council Procedure**
- (iii). Minute 172 (Cabinet – 24 January 2013)  
Committee Calendar 2013/2014**

**(2) That minute 186 (Cabinet – 7 February 2013) Nomination of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Municipal Year 2013/2014, be noted.**

## 109 **MATTERS FOR NOTING**

**Resolved – That the following matters be noted –**

- (i). **Minute 146 (Cabinet – 20 December 2012)**  
**Financial Monitoring – Revenue (Month 7)**
- (ii). **Minute 147 (Cabinet – 20 December 2012)**  
**Financial Monitoring – Capital (Month 7)**
- (iii). **Minute 163 (Cabinet – 24 January 2013)**  
**Financial Monitoring – Revenue (Month 8)**
- (iv). **Minute 164 (Cabinet – 24 January 2013)**  
**Financial Monitoring – Capital (Month 8)**
- (v). **Minute 178 (Cabinet – 24 January 2013)**  
**Response to Consultation on the National Alcohol Strategy**  
**(Reason – Waiving of Call-In)**

## 110 **QUESTIONS**

Councillor Stuart Kelly, having given the appropriate notice in accordance with Standing Order 11, submitted a question addressed to the Leader of the Council, in respect of the Council's support for the introduction of the Living Wage.

The Leader of the Council responded accordingly.

In accordance with Standing Order 11, Councillor Kelly asked a supplementary question. The Leader of the Council responded accordingly and agreed to provide Councillor Kelly with a detailed written response.

## 111 **PROCEDURE**

On a motion by Councillor W Davies and seconded by Councillor B Kenny, it was –

**Resolved (Unanimously) – That Standing Order 7(8) be applied after the closure of the third debate.**

## 112 **MATTERS FOR DEBATE**

The matters listed for debate in accordance with Standing Order 5(2) (n) were dealt with as indicated in minutes 113 to 126 below.

## 113 **MOTION: UNFAIR CUTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies  
Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan

- (1) This Council believes that the Government's cuts to the funding of local Councils is proving to be profoundly unfair. Authorities with the highest levels of poverty and deprivation are facing the biggest cuts. At the same time, wealthy areas with the lowest levels of poverty pay less.
- (2) Wirral is losing £151 per head in cuts. Liverpool is losing £252, Manchester is losing £209, Newcastle is losing £162, Birmingham is losing £166, and Sheffield is losing £140 per head.
- (3) Milton Keynes is losing just £38 per head. Central Bedfordshire is losing £18 per head. And people in North Dorset are losing just £2 per head.

- (4) Council also notes that a recent report by SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities outside London) indicates that out of the 47 SIGOMA authorities Wirral has had the largest cut in its funding from central government (2.62% cut in revenue spending power 2013-14). This compares with the SIGOMA average of -1.78% and the average for Shire Districts of -1.37%.
- (5) Council supports the 'Come Together' Campaign launched by the Mayor of Liverpool on the 18th January when the Leaders of Core Cities, Merseyside Districts and Faith Leaders met to discuss the impact of the Government's austerity policy.
- (6) Council supports the on-line petition which has been launched at [www.come-together.co.uk](http://www.come-together.co.uk). This calls on the Government to urgently re-think its policy and to apply the cuts more fairly across the country, protecting those most in need, and making sure those in wealthy parts of the country pay their fair share. Council urges all residents to sign this petition.

### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Alan Brighthouse  
Seconded by Councillor Pat Williams

Delete all and insert:

- (1) Council notes that this Government, in the same way as the previous Government, distributes the Revenue Support Grant so as to take account of the high cost of providing services in areas of high deprivation, thus ensuring that Councils in areas of high deprivation receive significantly more funding than those in the more affluent parts of the country.
- (2) Council does, however, recognise Wirral's particular financial difficulties as it endeavours to overcome problems created over many years. Council requests the Leader of the Council to make representations to the Government so as to ensure the Government is aware of the specific circumstances facing the Borough.

Following a debate and Councillor Phil Davies having replied, the amendment proposed by Councillor Brighthouse was put and lost (27:35) (One abstention).

The motion was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention)

### **Resolved (35:27) (One abstention) –**

- (1) This Council believes that the Government's cuts to the funding of local Councils is proving to be profoundly unfair. Authorities with the highest levels of poverty and deprivation are facing the biggest cuts. At the same time, wealthy areas with the lowest levels of poverty pay less.**
- (2) Wirral is losing £151 per head in cuts. Liverpool is losing £252, Manchester is losing £209, Newcastle is losing £162, Birmingham is losing £166, and Sheffield is losing £140 per head.**
- (3) Milton Keynes is losing just £38 per head. Central Bedfordshire is losing £18 per head. And people in North Dorset are losing just £2 per head.**
- (4) Council also notes that a recent report by SIGOMA (Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities outside London) indicates that out of**

the 47 SIGOMA authorities Wirral has had the largest cut in its funding from central government (2.62% cut in revenue spending power 2013-14). This compares with the SIGOMA average of -1.78% and the average for Shire Districts of -1.37%.

- (5) Council supports the 'Come Together' Campaign launched by the Mayor of Liverpool on the 18th January when the Leaders of Core Cities, Merseyside Districts and Faith Leaders met to discuss the impact of the Government's austerity policy.
- (6) Council supports the on-line petition which has been launched at [www.come-together.co.uk](http://www.come-together.co.uk). This calls on the Government to urgently re-think its policy and to apply the cuts more fairly across the country, protecting those most in need, and making sure those in wealthy parts of the country pay their fare share. Council urges all residents to sign this petition.

#### 114 MOTION: COUNCIL TAX REFERENDUM

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

- (1) Council notes the Government has provided a further £1,336,643 (on top of the £9,800,000 already received by the Council specifically for this purpose since 2011) each year for the next two years, to allow Wirral Council to freeze its Council Tax in March this year.
- (2) Council believes for the Labour administration to refuse this cash, and the increased bills it will bring, would be a slap in the face for Wirral tax payers and a further demonstration that this administration is only interested in its own internal issues and not the residents of Wirral.
- (3) Council believes that residents must have a say before the administration turns its back on the cash provided by the Government and instructs the administration to put any increase in Wirral's Council tax to our residents in a referendum.

#### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Pat Hackett

Seconded by Councillor Jean Stapleton

*Delete everything after paragraph (1) and insert the following:*

- (2) Council notes that no decision has been made regarding the Council Tax freeze grant.
- (3) This matter will be dealt with at the proper time, i.e. when the Administration publishes its budget proposals.

#### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston

Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

*Delete paragraph (3) and insert:*

- (3) Council notes the cost of holding a 'Council Tax Increase' referendum is estimated to be £200,000 and believes this money would be better used to support front line services currently under threat.

Councillor Hackett agreed to accept the amendment proposed by Councillor Johnston as an addition to his amendment.

Following a debate and Councillor Jeff Green having replied, the amendment proposed by Councillor Hackett, incorporating the amendment proposed by Councillor Johnston was put and carried (42:20) (One abstention).

The substantive motion was put and carried (42:20) (One abstention).

**Resolved (42:20) (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council notes the Government has provided a further £1,336,643 (on top of the £9,800,000 already received by the Council specifically for this purpose since 2011) each year for the next two years, to allow Wirral Council to freeze its Council Tax in March this year.**
- (2) Council notes that no decision has been made regarding the Council Tax freeze grant.**
- (3) This matter will be dealt with at the proper time, i.e. when the Administration publishes its budget proposals.**
- (4) Council notes the cost of holding a 'Council Tax Increase' referendum is estimated to be £200,000 and believes this money would be better used to support front line services currently under threat.**

115 **MOTION: COUNCIL FINANCES**

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney  
Seconded by Councillor Pat Williams

- (1) Council recognises that the economic problems of the country are resulting in grant reductions from the Government and that the underlying financial problems are the same for all parties, a fact tacitly accepted by senior figures in the Labour Party nationally who have said they will not reverse all cuts.
- (2) Council recognises that not all of Wirral's problems result from the present economic problems of the country and a significant percentage of our problems are made in Wirral.
- (3) A report from the Director of Finance to Cabinet in December highlighted the problems which have been built up over a number of years, including the recording of uncollected debts as assets being carried out over as much as 14 years which has contributed to an inaccurate picture of our financial position.
- (4) It notes that the projected budget gap for 2013/2014, according to a report by the Director of Finance, is £39m, of which £17m (43%) is caused by reduced grants and £22m (57%) as a result of local financial governance issues.
- (5) Council notes with concern that, in addition to the Labour Group misrepresenting the cause of the budget problems as solely the responsibility of the Government whilst ignoring their own contribution, the Council has, on



occasion, also not been completely factual as to the causes of the budget situation.

- (6) This Council resolves that it will ensure that comprehensive, complete and correct information is given by its officers to both the people of Wirral and used in negotiations with the Government.
- (7) Council resolves to continue to discuss our financial problems with the Government with the aim of finding a way through the impact of the problems this Council has inherited. It recognises that the failure over a number of years to deal with the real situation means that many difficult decisions will need to be made in a short period.

### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan

*Delete all and replace with the following:-*

- (1) Council believes that it is unreasonable for the Liberal Democrats to try to avoid taking the blame for the draconian cuts in local government funding which they share responsibility for as a consequence of their coalition with the Tories nationally.
- (2) Council notes that most of the £39 million which the authority has to save in 2013/14 is due to direct cuts in government grants and the government's failure to fund increases in demographic demand, with particular reference to services for children and young people and adult social care.
- (3) Council notes that the authority's financial position has been made worse by a £17 million overspend left by the previous Tory-led administration and a sum of £4 million which the last administration wasted on a Council tax rebate which they put forward shortly before last May's local elections.
- (4) In addition to the above, Council notes that there is some £38.4 million of exceptional items in 2013/14 which will need to be funded through measures such as capitalisation and use of reserves.
- (5) Council resolves to continue being open and transparent in reporting the financial position of the authority. It agrees to continue lobbying the government for a fair deal for Wirral and recognises the progress that has been made in putting the Council's finances in order.

Following a debate and Councillor Tom Harney having replied, the amendment was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention).

The substantive motion was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention)

### **Resolved (35:27) (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council believes that it is unreasonable for the Liberal Democrats to try to avoid taking the blame for the draconian cuts in local government funding which they share responsibility for as a consequence of their coalition with the Tories nationally.**

- (2) Council notes that most of the £39 million which the authority has to save in 2013/14 is due to direct cuts in government grants and the government's failure to fund increases in demographic demand, with particular reference to services for children and young people and adult social care.
- (3) Council notes that the authority's financial position has been made worse by a £17 million overspend left by the previous Tory-led administration and a sum of £4 million which the last administration wasted on a Council tax rebate which they put forward shortly before last May's local elections.
- (4) In addition to the above, Council notes that there is some £38.4 million of exceptional items in 2013/14 which will need to be funded through measures such as capitalisation and use of reserves.
- (5) Council resolves to continue being open and transparent in reporting the financial position of the authority. It agrees to continue lobbying the government for a fair deal for Wirral and recognises the progress that has been made in putting the Council's finances in order.

116 **MOTION: VASCULAR SERVICES REVIEW**

Proposed by Councillor Chris Jones  
 Seconded by Councillor Moira McLaughlin

- (1) This Council is profoundly disappointed with the decision of the Secretary of State for Health to confirm the proposal to base the centre for vascular services in the South Mersey region at the Countess of Chester hospital rather than Arrowe Park hospital.
- (2) It is regrettable that in spite of the views expressed previously by this Council, the Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee and many Wirral residents, the Government has decided not to review these plans.
- (3) This Council remains firmly of the view that Arrowe Park hospital has excellent vascular services and that this decision is a retrograde step and will result in a diminution in health provision for Wirral residents.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

**Resolved (62:0) (One abstention) – That the Motion be approved.**

117 **MOTION: ATTACK ON DEMOCRACY IN WIRRAL**

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green  
 Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

- (1) Council believes that annual local elections provide our residents with an essential opportunity to give a verdict on the work of individual Councillors in representing their views, working on their behalf to improve their community and assisting in solving problems they might have.
- (2) Council notes the Labour Administration's proposal to abolish local elections in Wirral will also remove the opportunity for the residents of Wirral, on an annual basis, to pass judgement on the policies pursued by those chosen to lead the

Council and their stewardship of the money taken from the public's pocket in local and national taxation.

- (3) Council therefore believes the Labour administration's proposal to abolish annual local elections to be fundamentally undemocratic and a return to its authoritarian ways.
- (4) Council expresses its opposition to this proposal and calls on the administration to stop wasting time and resident's money on taking it any further.

**Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Tony Smith  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Whittingham

*Delete everything and replace with the following:*

- (1) Council does not agree that moving to all out elections every four years is an 'attack on democracy'. This model is used widely throughout England by Councils of all political persuasions.
- (2) Elections every four years have the potential to deliver more stable administrations and avoid frequent lurches in policies which is often the outcome of annual elections where rapid changes in political control take place.
- (3) Council notes that a move to all out elections every four years will result in a saving to the authority of £100,000.
- (4) Council further notes that this budget option was supported by almost 75% of respondents in the 'What Really Matters' consultation.

**Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

*In paragraph (1), replace the words "annual local elections provide" with "an established pattern of elections provides".*

*In paragraph (2), replace the word "annual" with "regular".*

*Delete paragraphs (3) and (4) and insert:*

- (3) Council believes that alternative options can be considered that maintain regular local elections, such as reducing the size of the Council to 60 members, comprising 30 two Member wards elected every two years, and asks LDWP to consider all available options and report their findings to Cabinet and subsequently to Council.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Gilchrist was put and lost (7:55) (One abstention).

The amendment proposed by Councillor Tony Smith was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention).

The substantive motion was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention)

**Resolved (35:27) (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council does not agree that moving to all out elections every four years is an ‘attack on democracy’. This model is used widely throughout England by Councils of all political persuasions.**
- (2) Elections every four years have the potential to deliver more stable administrations and avoid frequent lurches in policies which is often the outcome of annual elections where rapid changes in political control take place.**
- (3) Council notes that a move to all out elections every four years will result in a saving to the authority of £100,000.**
- (4) Council further notes that this budget option was supported by almost 75% of respondents in the ‘What Really Matters’ consultation.**

118 **MOTION: ‘HEALTHY HOMES’ AND THE CASE FOR SELECTIVE LICENSING OF THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

Councillor Geoffrey Watt, having declared his disclosable pecuniary interest in this matter left the Chamber during its consideration.

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly  
Seconded by Councillor Alan Brighthouse

- (1) Council notes that The Wirral JSNA<sup>1</sup> estimates that ‘33.9% of private rented dwellings (5,929) have at least one category 1 hazard’ which include excess cold, tripping hazards, and electrical hazards (section 2.2 refers); that The Wirral Housing Strategy<sup>2</sup> highlights the sector as containing many vulnerable households where ‘housing conditions are around three times worse than owner occupied homes’ (page 13 refers); and that the last Private Sector Stock Condition Survey showed that 59.3% of properties in the private rented sector were non-decent. Council believes this has a negative effect on the health of those living in such circumstances.
- (2) Council notes and supports The Healthy Homes Scheme which began with a pilot project in the Victoria Parade Area in New Brighton and notes that 836 Healthy Homes assessments have been completed, resulting in 966 referrals to partner organisations. Council notes that most referrals to the scheme are from health & social care professionals and that the scheme is contributing to key Public Health priorities such as reducing health inequalities.
- (3) Council notes with concern that, despite the number of privately rented properties increasing by 80% between 2001 – 2011, only 16% (2,761) of private rented properties are included in Wirral’s own voluntary Accreditation Scheme and thanks the 28 landlords and agents who are members for their commitment to the aims of the Scheme on behalf of their tenants<sup>3</sup>.
- (4) Council notes the selective licensing powers available to local authorities and their use in tackling landlord failure in other parts of the country, notably Newcastle CC and Newham LBC, and that Liverpool CC has begun its own consultation on the issue<sup>4</sup>.

- (5) Council acknowledges the Housing Strategy's aspiration to 'see a healthy private rented sector with good quality properties and management standards' by 2026. (page 13 refers)
- (6) Council believes people looking to rent privately have no means of establishing whether their prospective landlord is good or bad and that if they are accredited they will have had to demonstrate that they have satisfactory management arrangements in place and their properties meet a defined standard.
- (7) Council believes that licensing offers the opportunity for prospective tenants to make informed choices and also protect communities who have suffered from neighbouring properties being bought by landlords and let indiscriminately to unsuitable tenants.
- (8) Council notes an increase in the use of statutory enforcement powers under Housing Act 2004 nationally and in Wirral and Council agrees to sign a statement of support for Shelter's national campaign by pledging to do everything within its power to stamp out rogue landlords<sup>5</sup>.
- (9) Council calls upon the cabinet members responsible for Housing/Community Safety and Public Health to work together to re-examine the case for using selective licensing as part of the tool kit available in tackling sub standard housing and poorly managed private rented accommodation and to use those powers as part of a roll out of the New Brighton Healthy Homes scheme to other areas of Wirral where LSOA information suggests public health problems are linked to the lack of decent homes.

#### Web Link References

1. Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment –  
[http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document\\_uploads/jsna/JSNA%20Housing%20Section%20Final%20Dec%202011\\_44746.pdf](http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/jsna/JSNA%20Housing%20Section%20Final%20Dec%202011_44746.pdf)
2. Wirral Housing Strategy (2011-2026) –  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/3857>
3. Property Accreditation Scheme – List of Accredited Landlords and Agents  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/3336>
4. Liverpool City Council Cabinet Report 21/12/12 –  
<http://councillors.liverpool.gov.uk/documents/s112943/H7%20-%20Introduction%20of%20Licensing%20for%20Private%20Rented%20Property.pdf>
5. Shelter Campaign Site – Evict Rogue Landlords  
[http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/evict\\_rogue\\_landlords](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/evict_rogue_landlords)

#### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor George Davies  
Seconded by Councillor Chris Jones

#### *Add new paragraph (10)*

- (10) Council calls upon the Cabinet members responsible for Housing/Community Safety and Public Health to work together to re-examine the case for using selective licensing in conjunction with other tools available such as landlord accreditation, statutory enforcement, Healthy Homes and Empty Property

Assistance in tackling poor quality private rented accommodation in some of our poorest neighbourhoods in the Borough.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

Councillor Kelly agreed to accept the amendment proposed by Councillor Davies.

The Motion, as amended, was put and carried (61:0) (One abstention)

**Resolved (61:0) (One Abstention) –**

- (1) Council notes that The Wirral JSNA<sup>1</sup> estimates that ‘33.9% of private rented dwellings (5,929) have at least one category 1 hazard’ which include excess cold, tripping hazards, and electrical hazards (section 2.2 refers); that The Wirral Housing Strategy<sup>2</sup> highlights the sector as containing many vulnerable households where ‘housing conditions are around three times worse than owner occupied homes’ (page 13 refers); and that the last Private Sector Stock Condition Survey showed that 59.3% of properties in the private rented sector were non-decent. Council believes this has a negative effect on the health of those living in such circumstances.**
- (2) Council notes and supports The Healthy Homes Scheme which began with a pilot project in the Victoria Parade Area in New Brighton and notes that 836 Healthy Homes assessments have been completed, resulting in 966 referrals to partner organisations. Council notes that most referrals to the scheme are from health & social care professionals and that the scheme is contributing to key Public Health priorities such as reducing health inequalities.**
- (3) Council notes with concern that, despite the number of privately rented properties increasing by 80% between 2001 – 2011, only 16% (2,761) of private rented properties are included in Wirral’s own voluntary Accreditation Scheme and thanks the 28 landlords and agents who are members for their commitment to the aims of the Scheme on behalf of their tenants<sup>3</sup>.**
- (4) Council notes the selective licensing powers available to local authorities and their use in tackling landlord failure in other parts of the country, notably Newcastle CC and Newham LBC, and that Liverpool CC has begun its own consultation on the issue<sup>4</sup>.**
- (5) Council acknowledges the Housing Strategy’s aspiration to ‘see a healthy private rented sector with good quality properties and management standards’ by 2026. (page 13 refers)**
- (6) Council believes people looking to rent privately have no means of establishing whether their prospective landlord is good or bad and that if they are accredited they will have had to demonstrate that they have satisfactory management arrangements in place and their properties meet a defined standard.**
- (7) Council believes that licensing offers the opportunity for prospective tenants to make informed choices and also protect communities who have suffered from neighbouring properties being bought by landlords and let indiscriminately to unsuitable tenants.**

- (8) Council notes an increase in the use of statutory enforcement powers under Housing Act 2004 nationally and in Wirral and Council agrees to sign a statement of support for Shelter's national campaign by pledging to do everything within its power to stamp out rogue landlords<sup>5</sup>.
- (9) Council calls upon the cabinet members responsible for Housing/Community Safety and Public Health to work together to re-examine the case for using selective licensing as part of the tool kit available in tackling sub standard housing and poorly managed private rented accommodation and to use those powers as part of a roll out of the New Brighton Healthy Homes scheme to other areas of Wirral where LSOA information suggests public health problems are linked to the lack of decent homes.
- (10) Council calls upon the Cabinet members responsible for Housing/Community Safety and Public Health to work together to re-examine the case for using selective licensing in conjunction with other tools available such as landlord accreditation, statutory enforcement, Healthy Homes and Empty Property Assistance in tackling poor quality private rented accommodation in some of our poorest neighbourhoods in the Borough.

#### Web Link References

1. Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment –  
[http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document\\_uploads/jsna/JSNA%20Housing%20Section%20Final%20Dec%202011\\_44746.pdf](http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/jsna/JSNA%20Housing%20Section%20Final%20Dec%202011_44746.pdf)
2. Wirral Housing Strategy (2011-2026) –  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/3857>
3. Property Accreditation Scheme – List of Accredited Landlords and Agents  
<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/downloads/3336>
4. Liverpool City Council Cabinet Report 21/12/12 –  
<http://councillors.liverpool.gov.uk/documents/s112943/H7%20-%20Introduction%20of%20Licensing%20for%20Private%20Rented%20Property.pdf>
5. Shelter Campaign Site – Evict Rogue Landlords  
[http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/evict\\_rogue\\_landlords](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/evict_rogue_landlords)

#### 119 MOTION: THE EMPTY RHETORIC OF LOCALISM

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones  
Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny

- (1) This Council is profoundly disappointed that the Government's support for 'localism' is proving to be merely empty rhetoric on two key issues where new duties have been given to the Council but funding has been cut.
- (2) In the Spending Review 2010 the Government announced that Council Tax Benefit would be abolished and replaced with localised support schemes for Council Tax administered by local authorities. At the same time, it was announced that Government support would be reduced by 10% of current year spend. For Wirral this amounts to a shortfall of £3.2 million.

- (3) The Government has also transferred responsibility for administering Crisis Loans for Living Expenses and Community Care Grants from the Department of Works and Pensions to local authorities via a local scheme and, in the case of Wirral, the funding for these schemes has been cut by £229,575. At a time when a range of benefits are being cut by the Government, to reduce the amount of money to help people in crisis and to ask Councils to administer it demonstrates a clear need for this decision to be reviewed.
- (4) It is difficult to see how such decisions by Government are consistent with localism particularly where adequate resources are not devolved to local Councils to enable them to deliver effective services to local residents.
- (5) Council calls on the Government to undertake an urgent review of its policies on localism with a view to ensuring that transfers of duties and responsibilities from central to local government are accompanied by adequate resources.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

**Resolved (35:27) (One Abstention) – That the Motion be approved.**

120 **OBJECTION: MINUTE 170 (CABINET - 24 JANUARY 2013)  
NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING**

Proposed by Councillor John Hale  
Seconded by Councillor Simon Mountney

- (1) Council believes a Constituency is not a Neighbourhood but a collection of Neighbourhoods.
- (2) The proposal to abolish Neighbourhood Forums will seriously damage the relationship of local residents with the Council, as they will be unable to highlight problems or concerns attached to their particular neighbourhood as they can do at present at regular meetings, at convenient locations with Councillors, Council Officers and representatives of other public services.
- (3) Residents will lose the relatively modest funds allocated to the Neighbourhood Forums and at present used to support local projects and initiatives put forward by a variety of local voluntary groups for the benefit of the local community.
- (4) It is not just neighbourhoods in areas of West Wirral such as Pensby, Barnston and Thingwall who will lose out, but every neighbourhood in Birkenhead, Wallasey and South Wirral.
- (5) We do not believe that there was as claimed, strong support for this new model when a majority expressed the greatest reluctance or disagreed completely.
- (6) It is almost certain that the new scheme would be more costly to run than the present scheme even allowing for the abolition of grants and financial support for the local Neighbourhood Forums.
- (7) Council therefore recommends no action be taken on this proposal until proper and full consultation has taken place between the Party Leaders and, through them, all elected Members as the Deputy Leader of the Council promised the Improvement Board on the 23 January 2013.



Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

The objection was put and lost (27:35)

121 **OBJECTION: MINUTE 170 (CABINET - 24 JANUARY 2013)  
NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING**

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

*Delete recommendation and insert:*

Council notes the proposal to establish a new neighbourhood working approach in Wirral and refers the report for further discussion to a Members' Working Group and that the Working Group be asked to consider and report back on:

- The appropriateness of transient constituency boundaries being used to define the proposed committees as opposed to natural community ties.
- How effective localised engagement at ward level can be maintained with representatives of the local community.
- How resources will be properly and fairly devolved to support delivery of the local plans.
- The overall financial and democratic implications arising from the proposals.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

The objection was put and lost (27:35)

**Resolved – That Cabinet minute 170 (24 January 2013) – Neighbourhood Working, be thus approved.**

122 **MOTION: CUTS TO TAX CREDITS**

Proposed by Councillor Mike Sullivan  
Seconded by Councillor Bernie Mooney

- (1) This Council condemns the Government's decision to cut Working Tax Credits. In Wirral, 23,300 hard-working people will be hit by this cut.
- (2) Council also notes with extreme concern that at the same time as the Government is giving the richest 2 percent of earners a £3 billion tax cut, Tory MP for Wirral West, Esther McVey, has admitted that her Government has plunged 200,000 children into poverty with the cut to Tax Credits.

**Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Wendy Clements  
Seconded by Councillor Simon Mountney

*Delete all and replace with:*

- (1) This Council notes the largest ever increase in personal tax allowance from April 2013 which will lift more than 2 million people out of paying tax altogether.
- (2) Council further notes that under Labour the target to halve child poverty by 2010 was missed by 600,000 children.

- (3) Council further notes that it is misleading to look at the impacts of uprating (eg Working Tax Credits) in isolation, and the Government is investing in tackling the root causes of child poverty through making work pay. Council recognises that work is the best route out of poverty. Universal credit will reduce poverty by making work pay and providing an effective route out of poverty for up to 250,000 children. 75% of the gainers from Universal Credit are in the bottom 40% of the income distribution.
- (4) Council welcomes the Government's consultation on better measures for Child Poverty to better reflect the reality of Child Poverty in the UK today.
- (5) Council notes that the Government is committed to tackling child poverty and to eradicate the causes including worklessness, educational failure and family breakdown, rather than simply treating the consequences of the problem.
- (6) Council notes that income will remain a key indicator in defining what it means to be in poverty, but income is not all that matters. It is now widely understood that the current relative income measure by itself is not an accurate picture of child poverty. There need to be better measures that capture the reality of children's experience of poverty. That is why the Government is consulting on what those measures should be.
- (7) Council notes that the Government is taking action to tackle child poverty including introducing universal credit, which will simplify the benefit system and ensure that work is always the best option; investing more in nursery and pre-school provision, including providing 260,000 disadvantaged two-year-olds with 15 hours a week free child care; investing in education, including £2.5 billion for the pupil premium for disadvantaged pupils and £1.2 billion for capital investment in schools; and raising the tax threshold which will lift more than 2 million people out of paying tax altogether.

#### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Alan Brighthouse

Seconded by Councillor Tom Harney

*Delete all and insert:*

- (1) Council notes that Working Tax Credits are expensive to administer, prone to error and discourage an individual from increasing their earnings.
- (2) Council recognises that a far more efficient way to increase household income of low and middle income families is to increase the level at which tax becomes payable and to encourage the adoption of a living wage.
- (3) Council also notes the measures taken by the Coalition Government to create a fairer tax system. Apart from one month of the last Labour Government, the rate of tax paid by the highest earners was less than at any time under the present Government. In addition, increases to Capital Gains Tax, Stamp Duty and the removal of Child Benefit from high rate tax payers, together with a significant reduction in the income tax paid by low and middle income families, has brought a greater degree of fairness to personal taxation.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Wendy Clements was put and lost (27:35)  
(One abstention)

The amendment proposed by Councillor Alan Brighthouse was put and lost (27:35)  
(One abstention)

The Motion was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention)

**Resolved (35:27) (One abstention) –**

- (1) This Council condemns the Government’s decision to cut Working Tax Credits. In Wirral, 23,300 hard-working people will be hit by this cut.**
- (2) Council also notes with extreme concern that at the same time as the Government is giving the richest 2 percent of earners a £3 billion tax cut, Tory MP for Wirral West, Esther McVey, has admitted that her Government has plunged 200,000 children into poverty with the cut to Tax Credits.**

### 123 **MOTION: CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY BLACKLISTS**

Proposed by Councillor Dave Mitchell  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

- (1) Council notes that there are some construction companies who have been supporting and subscribing to industry ‘blacklists’ collated by the Consulting Association (a private consultancy) and that the Information Commissioner has investigated and taken legal action against both the Consulting Association and a number of construction companies for this practice.
- (2) Council believes ‘Blacklisting’ is an unacceptable practice that cannot be condoned and therefore resolves not to include companies who continue using this information on the approved list for future construction work procured by the Council.

#### **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Joe Walsh  
Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny

*Add the following:*

- (3) Council supports the national campaign, led by the GMB union, aimed at forcing those who have been involved in blacklisting to apologise to those who have been affected by it.
- (4) Council further notes that as a result of the concentration of construction activity in and around large cities, many of those alleged to have been discriminated against live in large urban areas. This may well include residents of Wirral.
- (5) Council instructs officers to write to the Information Commissioner to release the names and addresses of residents of Wirral who are affected by any blacklist.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

Councillor Mitchell agreed to accept the amendment proposed by Councillor Walsh.

The Motion, as amended, was put and carried (62:0) (One abstention)

**Resolved (62:0 (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council notes that there are some construction companies who have been supporting and subscribing to industry ‘blacklists’ collated by the Consulting Association (a private consultancy) and that the Information Commissioner has investigated and taken legal action against both the Consulting Association and a number of construction companies for this practice.**
- (2) Council believes ‘Blacklisting’ is an unacceptable practice that cannot be condoned and therefore resolves not to include companies who continue using this information on the approved list for future construction work procured by the Council.**
- (3) Council supports the national campaign, led by the GMB union, aimed at forcing those who have been involved in blacklisting to apologise to those who have been affected by it.**
- (4) Council further notes that as a result of the concentration of construction activity in and around large cities, many of those alleged to have been discriminated against live in large urban areas. This may well include residents of Wirral.**
- (5) Council instructs officers to write to the Information Commissioner to release the names and addresses of residents of Wirral who are affected by any blacklist.**

#### 124 **MOTION: PAYDAY LOANS**

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones

Seconded by Councillor Joe Walsh

- (1) Council notes that the Conservative Party is heavily funded by City of London finance businesses.
- (2) Council further notes that since the world-wide bank and hedge-fund crash of 2008 just 1000 of the richest UK residents own wealth that has increased by £155billion. Simultaneously, councils, the NHS, low-wage families, and pensioners, are hit by the Government’s cuts whilst the Tories’ super-rich funders are granted breathtaking tax reductions.
- (3) In hideous contrast, as many as a million UK residents have now been victims of “Payday loans” whilst 7.8 million are struggling to keep a roof over their families’ heads. As many as 2.8 million householders have overdrawn in their banks to meet their mortgage or rent bills. Some of the most desperate victims of Government “austerity” policies, designed to pay off the bankers’ gambling losses, quickly become sucked into never-ending debt through “Payday loans” as lenders are allowed to charge as much as 4,000% in annual interest rates. Council calls on this government to legislate urgently to end this immoral exploitation of its most vulnerable victims.

## **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Christopher Blakeley  
Seconded by Councillor Jeff Green

*Delete all and replace with:*

- (1) Council notes that the Government is taking steps to tackle the problems associated with high cost credit.
- (2) Council further notes the Government is giving financial regulators the powers to impose restrictions on the total cost of credit. Additionally, the Government is also giving the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) a new power to suspend consumer credit licences immediately where there is an urgent need to protect consumers.
- (3) Alongside its publication of a progress report in November 2012, the OFT announced it has opened formal investigations into several payday lenders. These investigations are targeting aggressive debt collection practices and the OFT has written to all 240 payday lenders about poor practices in the sector. The OFT has also published revised Debt Collection Guidance. This guidance focuses on a specific repayment mechanism to ensure that traders with a consumer credit licence do not misuse it.
- (4) Beyond this, the Government has taken action to make sure consumers are better protected. Following discussions with the Government, 90 per cent of the payday and short-term loan industry agreed to improve their codes of practice to increase transparency and provide better protection for consumers. Commitments include: a good practice customer charter, more help for those in financial difficulty and effective monitoring by the Trade Association to root out poor practices.
- (5) The Government has also provided a £27 million grant to provide face-to-face debt advice and the funding contribution of £1 million to the National Debtline to support telephone debt advice has been maintained for 2012/13. This is in addition to the Money Advice Service which offers free national financial advice, helping to increase levels of financial literacy and empowering consumers to take charge of their finances.
- (6) Council puts on record its thanks to the Government for the action it has taken and continues to take to deal with this problem and urges it to continue to work with the OFT to bring about continuing improvements.

## **Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Pat Williams  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

*Delete paragraphs (1) and (2).*

*Renumber paragraph (3) as paragraph (1) and delete "In hideous contrast," and replace with "Council is concerned that".*

*Insert:*

- (2) Council welcomes the fact that the Financial Services Act 2012 gives the new Financial Conduct Authority powers to cap the total amount charged by the

high-cost credit industry and acknowledges the contribution made in achieving this by Stella Creasy MP and The Most Reverend Justin Welby and calls on MPs to monitor the work of the FCA to ensure that credit customers are properly protected against extortion.

- (3) Council further agrees to write to Wirral Members of Parliament, raising its concerns that high cost credit companies should also be controlled under the Ofcom Broadcasting Code and only be allowed to advertise after the 2100hrs 'watershed'; Council considers high credit commercials are wholly inappropriate during children's programmes.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Blakeley was put and lost (27:35) (One abstention)

The amendment proposed by Councillor Williams was put and lost (27:35) (One abstention)

The Motion was put and carried (35:27) (One abstention)

**Resolved (35:27) (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council notes that the Conservative Party is heavily funded by City of London finance businesses.**
- (2) Council further notes that since the world-wide bank and hedge-fund crash of 2008 just 1000 of the richest UK residents own wealth that has increased by £155billion. Simultaneously, councils, the NHS, low-wage families, and pensioners, are hit by the Government's cuts whilst the Tories' super-rich funders are granted breathtaking tax reductions.**
- (3) In hideous contrast, as many as a million UK residents have now been victims of "Payday loans" whilst 7.8 million are struggling to keep a roof over their families' heads. As many as 2.8 million householders have overdrawn in their banks to meet their mortgage or rent bills. Some of the most desperate victims of Government "austerity" policies, designed to pay off the bankers' gambling losses, quickly become sucked into never-ending debt through "Payday loans" as lenders are allowed to charge as much as 4,000% in annual interest rates. Council calls on this government to legislate urgently to end this immoral exploitation of its most vulnerable victims.**

**125 MOTION: TAX AVOIDANCE AND PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTS**

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney  
Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

- (1) Council notes the widespread practice of some multinational companies to minimise their exposure to UK taxation by manipulating their payments to subsidiaries located in tax havens.
- (2) Council expresses support for the many local businesses which make full and fair tax payments every year.

- (3) Council urges the Government to continue to extend its programme of measures designed to make all companies pay fair taxation based upon genuine profit levels.
- (4) Council notes the campaign of the consumer organisation, Ethical Consumer, to allow local councils and other public procurement bodies to take into account corporate tax strategies when they award public contracts and supports this aim.
- (5) Council notes that whilst procurement policy has some guidance regarding ethical procurement, this policy could be significantly strengthened; and calls on Cabinet to work with the Local Government Association to bring forward a set of legally binding procurement rules that require companies delivering and bidding for the delivery of public service contracts to demonstrate high ethical, environmental and anti-tax avoidance standards.

### **Amendment proposed in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson

*Add the following:*

- (6) Council supports fair taxation for companies, but this should also apply to citizens. Accordingly, Council condemns the huge tax cut for millionaires announced by George Osborne in last year's budget.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

Councillor Harney agreed to accept the amendment proposed by Councillor Kenny.

The Motion, as amended, was put and carried (42:20) (One abstention)

### **Resolved (42:20) (One abstention) –**

- (1) Council notes the widespread practice of some multinational companies to minimise their exposure to UK taxation by manipulating their payments to subsidiaries located in tax havens.**
- (2) Council expresses support for the many local businesses which make full and fair tax payments every year.**
- (3) Council urges the Government to continue to extend its programme of measures designed to make all companies pay fair taxation based upon genuine profit levels.**
- (4) Council notes the campaign of the consumer organisation, Ethical Consumer, to allow local councils and other public procurement bodies to take into account corporate tax strategies when they award public contracts and supports this aim.**
- (5) Council notes that whilst procurement policy has some guidance regarding ethical procurement, this policy could be significantly strengthened; and calls on Cabinet to work with the Local Government Association to bring forward a set of legally binding procurement rules that require companies delivering and bidding for the delivery of public**

**service contracts to demonstrate high ethical, environmental and anti-tax avoidance standards.**

- (6) Council supports fair taxation for companies, but this should also apply to citizens. Accordingly, Council condemns the huge tax cut for millionaires announced by George Osborne in last year's budget.**

126 **MOTION: UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist  
Seconded by Councillor Pat Williams

- (1) This Council notes that Universal Credit:
- is being developed with a Pathfinder Service in the Greater Manchester area from April 2013
  - is being extended to people who need that help and support with the aim of completing the new service by the end of 2017
  - has been the subject of a House of Commons Select Committee Report and regular feature of 'Parliamentary Questions' on its impact and progress.
- (2) Council notes that on 10 December 2012, Mr Clive Betts MP questioned the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions as follows....
- 'What progress is the Department making in discussing with councils about the need to provide a joined-up service so that, in future, people will need make only one contact when their incomes change?'*
- and that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith) stated...
- 'We are currently engaging in discussions with local authorities with the aim of ensuring that people receive a proper and comprehensive service.'*
- (3) This Council is anxious that Wirral's citizens involved in these changes should receive the 'proper and comprehensive service' being promised and believes that the Council's One Stop Shops and libraries are well placed to assist local people.
- (4) Council, therefore, requests that officers continue to engage with other authorities and the Local Government Association with a view to ensuring that an effective and accessible service emerges from that process.
- (5) Council, therefore, requests that Officers be asked to report on the shape of the emerging service to Cabinet and the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that Wirral can provide the 'proper and comprehensive service' envisaged for Wirral's citizens.

**Amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2)**

Proposed by Councillor Bernie Mooney  
Seconded by Councillor Tony Norbury

*Add the following:*



- (6) Council is concerned about a number of issues relating to universal credit. These include:
- Digital exclusion, as claimants will have to complete a universal credit claim on line.
  - The danger that claimants will be unable to budget effectively when their benefits are paid at monthly rather than fortnightly intervals as at present.
  - Doubts about whether the new system will provide genuine incentives to work longer or train for a more highly paid job.
  - Doubts about the quality of the new IT infrastructure which is being designed to deliver universal credit.
  - Lack of openness on the outcome of the universal credit pilot schemes.
- (7) Council supports Frank Field's call for the National Audit Office to carry out a special enquiry to examine the risks associated with universal credit.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 7(8) the Council did not debate this matter.

Councillor Gilchrist agreed to accept the amendment proposed by Councillor Mooney.

The Motion, as amended, was put and carried (42:20) (One abstention)

**Resolved (42:20) (One abstention) –**

**(1) This Council notes that Universal Credit:**

- **is being developed with a Pathfinder Service in the Greater Manchester area from April 2013**
- **is being extended to people who need that help and support with the aim of completing the new service by the end of 2017**
- **has been the subject of a House of Commons Select Committee Report and regular feature of 'Parliamentary Questions' on its impact and progress.**

**(2) Council notes that on 10 December 2012, Mr Clive Betts MP questioned the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions as follows....**

***'What progress is the Department making in discussing with councils about the need to provide a joined-up service so that, in future, people will need make only one contact when their incomes change?'***

**and that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith) stated...**

***'We are currently engaging in discussions with local authorities with the aim of ensuring that people receive a proper and comprehensive service.'***

**(3) This Council is anxious that Wirral's citizens involved in these changes should receive the 'proper and comprehensive service' being promised and believes that the Council's One Stop Shops and libraries are well placed to assist local people.**

**(4) Council, therefore, requests that officers continue to engage with other authorities and the Local Government Association with a view to**

ensuring that an effective and accessible service emerges from that process.

- (5) Council, therefore, requests that Officers be asked to report on the shape of the emerging service to Cabinet and the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that Wirral can provide the 'proper and comprehensive service' envisaged for Wirral's citizens.
- (6) Council is concerned about a number of issues relating to universal credit. These include:
- Digital exclusion, as claimants will have to complete a universal credit claim on line.
  - The danger that claimants will be unable to budget effectively when their benefits are paid at monthly rather than fortnightly intervals as at present.
  - Doubts about whether the new system will provide genuine incentives to work longer or train for a more highly paid job.
  - Doubts about the quality of the new IT infrastructure which is being designed to deliver universal credit.
  - Lack of openness on the outcome of the universal credit pilot schemes.
- (7) Council supports Frank Field's call for the National Audit Office to carry out a special enquiry to examine the risks associated with universal credit.

## 127 VACANCIES

The Council was requested to deal with the following vacancies

### Committees

#### **SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD**

Conservative deputy

#### **COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Conservative deputy

#### **HEALTH AND WELL BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Conservative deputy

#### **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Conservative deputy

### Outside Bodies

#### **COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT**

- (i). **Kylemore Community Centre Joint Management Committee**  
(Pensby and Thingwall Ward Councillors)

to replace former Councillor Don McCubbin

**(ii). Leasowe Play, Youth & Community Association Management Committee**

to replace former Councillor Anne McArdle

**HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**(iii). Leasowe Community Homes Management Board**

to replace former Councillor Anne McArdle

**REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY**

**(iv). Conservation Area Advisory Committees**

Conservation Area

Barnston to replace former Councillor Don McCubbin

Gayton and Heswall to replace former Councillor Peter Johnson

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

**(v). Heswall Advisory Body (Heswall ATC) (1:1:1)**

to replace former Councillor Peter Johnson

**STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES**

**(vi). Wirral Pedestrian Forum (1:1:1)**

to replace former Councillor Don McCubbin