

# COUNCIL

Monday, 9 December 2019

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Tony Smith) in the Chair  
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor George Davies)

Councillors	T Anderson	EA Grey	C Povall
	B Berry	P Hackett	L Rennie
	J Bird	P Hayes	J Robinson
	A Brame	S Hayes	L Rowlands
	D Burgess-Joyce	A Hodson	C Spriggs
	H Cameron	J Johnson	S Spoor
	K Cannon	AER Jones	J Stapleton
	C Carubia	C Jones	P Stuart
	P Cleary	S Jones	T Usher
	W Clements	T Jones	J Walsh
	M Collins	M Jordan	G Watt
	C Cooke	S Kelly	S Whittingham
	A Corkhill	B Kenny	I Williams
	T Cox	A Leech	KJ Williams
	S Foulkes	I Lewis	S Williams
	S Frost	M McLaughlin	J Williamson
	A Gardner	J McManus	G Wood
	P Gilchrist	D Mitchell	A Wright
	K Greaney	Y Nolan	
	JE Green	T Norbury	

Apologies Councillors C Blakeley K Hodson  
T Cottier C Muspratt  
WJ Davies M Sullivan

## 93 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Civic Mayor invited the Council to stand for a minute's silence in tribute to the homeless gentleman, Mr Michael Oakes, who had died on the streets of Birkenhead the previous week.

Prior to the meeting formally commencing, and at the invitation of the Civic Mayor, Rev Lucas Ngwa led the Council in prayer.

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 the interest.

Councillor Les Rowlands declared a personal interest by virtue of his wife's employment in the Children and Young People's Department.

In relation to agenda item 9H, 'Revised Pension Board Terms of Reference', Councillors Yvonne Nolan, Tony Norbury, Tony Jones, Geoffrey Watt, Jo Bird, George Davies and Cherry Povall declared a personal interest by virtue of either themselves, or a close family member, being a member of, or being in receipt of a pension from the Merseyside Pension Fund.

#### 94 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies had been received from Councillors Chris Blakeley, Tony Cottier, Bill Davies, Kathy Hodson, Christina Muspratt and Mike Sullivan.

The Civic Mayor announced that 2019 had been a very special year for the borough with a number of Borough of Culture events attracting many thousands of visitors and putting Wirral on a global stage with world class artists being attracted to Wirral. He thanked all the volunteers and staff who had been involved in helping to organise a broad range of cultural events. On 28 November, 2019 the inaugural Liverpool City Region Culture and Creativity Awards had been held at the Lady Lever Art Gallery, at which the official handover to Sefton Council had taken place.

On 7 November, 2019 he had met five young authors to receive their awards for stories that they had entered into the Wonderful Writers competition.

On 30 November he had attended Birkenhead Town Hall for a ceremony to unveil the bust of Admiral Miguel Grau, who had commanded Peru's naval fleet in the 1870's and whose most famous ship, the Huascar, was built by Laird Brothers of Birkenhead.

The Civic Mayor advised, by virtue of Standing Order 5(3), that agenda item 9A would be considered at the end of the meeting.

#### 95 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the both the extraordinary and ordinary meetings of the Council held on 14 October, 2019 had been circulated to Members.

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings be approved and adopted as correct records.**

96 **PETITIONS**

In accordance with Standing Order 21, the Mayor received one petition submitted by Councillor Elizabeth Grey requesting that Hoylake Beach continue to be raked.

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

97 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

98 **LEADER'S, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS' AND CHAIRS' REPORTS**

The Mayor introduced the reports from the Leader, Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs and asked for questions on any of the reports.

Councillor Andrew Hodson asked a question of Councillor Stuart Whittingham regarding how much had been received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government for disabled facilities grants. Councillor Whittingham responded that he would provide a written response. Councillor Hodson stated that he had been promised a response to this question before, having asked the same question in October, but did not receive one.

Councillor Jo Bird asked a question of Councillor Elizabeth Grey regarding the climate emergency and whether or not there would be any extra funding. Councillor Grey responded that she was having discussions with Councillor Janette Williamson regarding additional funding to meet the climate emergency.

Councillor Steve Foulkes asked a question of Councillor Elizabeth Grey regarding a request from Friends of the Earth to double tree cover by 2045. Councillor Grey stated that she had responded to Friends of the Earth and that the Council would be more than doubling its tree cover by 2030 not 2045. The Tree Strategy consultation was currently taking place and was available on the Council website.

Councillor Pat Cleary asked a question of Councillor Pat Hackett regarding the planned children's museum Eureka at Seacombe Ferry and what action had been taken to assess how visitors would travel and what viable public transport options there would be. Councillor Hackett responded and informed the Council that an estimated 187,000 visitors were expected each year and that it would be linked in to the various Wirral Waters developments around it and the possibility of the streetcar concept being used too. He stated that he

would provide more information on the public transport options and the means of transport by which visitors would be expected to arrive at the attraction.

Councillor Ian Lewis asked a question of Councillor Elizabeth Grey regarding the Council's bid for a share of the £30m Urban Tree Fund. Councillor Grey responded that details of all funding would be made public once the consultation on the Council's Tree Strategy had concluded.

Councillor Gillian Wood asked a question of Councillor Christine Spriggs regarding the handover of the Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture baton to Sefton Council. Councillor Spriggs responded by informing the Council that over 400,000 people had taken part in events and activities, including residents and visitors and that it had been a privilege and pleasure to be at the first LCR Culture and Creativity Awards ceremony at the Lady Lever Art Gallery. Plans were being put in place to build on the success of this year for future cultural events for the benefit of all residents in 2020.

Councillor Allan Brame asked a question of Councillor Julie McManus regarding the reporting of street light faults. Councillor McManus responded that there had been some problems with the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system and that this was changing in the New Year, so there was now a transition period. During this intermediate period she urged any Members who felt that their requests were taking too long to contact her either by email or telephone so that any issues could be expedited as quickly as possible. She also paid tribute to Simon Gong, who had highlighted a number of issues across the Wirral and who she and officers had been meeting with to ensure these street lighting issues were addressed.

Councillor Steve Hayes asked a question of Councillor Julie McManus regarding the Neat Streets programme and the removal of fly-tipped waste. Councillor McManus responded that roll-out of the Neat Streets campaign would take place in the New Year and that it had been put on hold during the pre-election period. Work had been undertaken in the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward as well as other areas, she acknowledged that there was a problem with unadopted alleyways across the borough. North West in Bloom could also help with this and she asked that if any Members had any particular issues with fly tipping within their wards to contact her.

Councillor Dave Mitchell asked a question of Councillor Julie McManus regarding street lighting issues which he had highlighted back in September 2018. Councillor McManus responded that there were some issues regarding outages, some could be addressed with a lantern replacement or some with a column replacement but some required Scottish Power to fix a connection problem which could take up to six weeks. She asked that Councillor Mitchell provide her with the details so she could find out what the hold up was and get the issues addressed.

Councillor Jeff Green asked a question of Councillor Chris Jones regarding publicity campaigns for free flu vaccinations available for 2 – 3 year olds. Councillor Jones responded that GPs and Health Visitors should be pushing the flu vaccination, which was a nasal spray and she invited Members to spread the word. She would also talk to the communications team to try and get the message out via social media channels.

Councillor Jean Robinson asked a question of Councillor Janette Williamson regarding the Empty Homes premium. Councillor Williamson responded that the premium would apply to homes which had been empty for 5 or more years and would now pay 300% of the Council Tax. It was hoped that this would encourage landlords to bring those properties back into use and would potentially raise £200,000. She commented that there shouldn't be any excuses for properties to be empty over 5 years but if there were extenuating circumstances these would be looked at on a case by case basis.

## 99 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked a question of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources concerning the acquisition of properties in New Ferry. Councillor Janette Williamson responded accordingly.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked a question of the Cabinet Member for Community Services concerning the costs of the various elements and sources of funding for A41 repairs between Port Sunlight and Birkenhead. Councillor Julie McManus responded accordingly and stated that she would provide a detailed response in writing for Councillor Gilchrist.

## 100 VACANCIES

The Council was invited to consider making appointments in respect of the membership of committees and outside organisations in accordance with Standing Order 25(6).

**Resolved – That the following appointments and nominations be confirmed:**

### **COMMITTEES**

#### **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Councillor Tony Norbury to replace Councillor Gillian Wood**

**Councillor Gillian Wood to replace Councillor Tony Norbury as a deputy.**

#### **Licensing, Health and Safety and GP Committee**

**Councillor Karl Greaney to replace Councillor Gillian Wood**

**Councillor Gillian Wood to replace Councillor Karl Greaney as a deputy.**

**Licensing Act 2003 Committee**

**Councillor Karl Greaney to replace Councillor Gillian Wood**

**OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

**St Bridget's Educational Trust**

**Councillor Alison Wright to replace Mr Gerry Ellis**

**West Kirby Charity**

**Deirdre O'Dwyer**

**James Robert Darwent**

**Helen Rosalinde O'Donnell**

**(all to be appointed until 8 December, 2023)**

**101 MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL**

In accordance with Standing Order 5(2) a number of matters had been submitted for consideration by the Council (see minutes 102 to 109 post).

**102 COUNCIL TAX (EMPTY HOMES PREMIUM)**

The first matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Council Tax (Empty Homes Premium) as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 November, 2019 (minute 51 refers).

In response to a comment from Councillor Ian Lewis, Councillor Janette Williamson stated that working with her colleague, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, the Council did have a wide ranging strategy around empty homes for bringing them back into use.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (57:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 51 of Cabinet, 4 November, 2019, be approved as follows, that the full premium of 200% be applied to homes that have been empty for five years or more as allowed by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 from 1 April 2020.**

**103 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME**

The second matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 4 November, 2019 (minute 52 refers).

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (55:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 52 of Cabinet, 4 November, 2019, be approved as follows:**

- (1) the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral to reduce the minimum amount payable for non-protected groups be amended from the current 22% to 12%; and**
- (2) the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for Wirral be amended to allow notifications in relation to Universal Credit to be treated as a claim for Council Tax Reduction.**

104 **COUNCIL TAX 2020/21 (TAXBASE, DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS AND LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME)**

The third matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Council Tax 2020/21 (Taxbase, Discounts and Exemptions and Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme) as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 25 November, 2019 (minute 60 refers).

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (55:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 60 of Cabinet of 25 November, 2019, be approved as follows:**

- (1) The figure of 93,965.9 be the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 and;**
- (2) The level and award of each local discount for 2020/21 be:**

**Wirral Women's & Children's Aid**

**To continue to award Wirral Women's & Children's Aid 100% discount.**

**Care Leaver's Discount**

**To award Care Leavers the requisite discount to reduce their Council Tax liability to zero until they are 25, from the 1 April 2020. This remained unchanged from 2019/20.**

**Empty Property Discounts**

**Discount category D = 0%. Full charge on properties undergoing renovations.**

**Discount category C = 0%. Full charge on empty properties from date they become unoccupied.**

Both remain unchanged.

Empty Property Premium = 100% (200% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty for more than two years. 200% (300% Council Tax) for unfurnished properties empty more than five years. This is allowed by the Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018. This had previously been reported to Cabinet on 4 November, 2019.

### Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme

The Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Relief Scheme, approved by Cabinet in October 2013, continues in its current format for 2020/2021. The Scheme offers help and assistance in exceptional cases of hardship.

### (3) Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)

The Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, previously reported to Cabinet on 4 November, 2019, be the approved Scheme for 2020/2021.

## 105 **QUARTER 2 2019/20 CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The fourth matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Quarter 2 2019/20 Capital Financial Monitoring and the Capital Programme as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 25 November, 2019 (minute 62 refers).

In response to a comment from Councillor Phil Gilchrist, Councillor Janette Williamson stated that the Capital Programme policies and procedures were currently being re-written to make it more Member led and to set more realistic goals so that some of the capital could be released for other things.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (56:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 62 of Cabinet, 25 November, 2019, be approved as follows:**

**(1) additional funding for the schemes referred to in paragraph 3.3 of the report.**

**(2) a revised Capital Programme of £55.889 million for 2019-20.**



106 **MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION RE-PROFILING**

The fifth matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Minimum Revenue Provision Re-Profiling as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting on 25 November, 2019 (minute 63 refers).

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (58:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 63 of Cabinet, 25 November, 2019, be approved as follows, the re-profiling of Minimum Revenue Provision charges resulting in a reduction of MRP charges by over £2m p.a. over the next ten years, recouped via higher charges in subsequent years.**

107 **DRAFT STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

The sixth matter requiring consideration was in relation to the Draft Statement of Licensing Policy as recommended by the Licensing Act 2003 Committee at its meeting on 13 November, 2019 (minute 11 refers).

In moving the motion, Councillor Andrew Hodson referred to a meeting he had arranged for January with the Licensing Panel, Council officers and Police officers to review the impact of the policy and the improvements which would hopefully have taken place over Christmas. All Members were welcome to attend the meeting. He also thanked all the licensing staff for all the work they had undertaken on this.

On a motion by Councillor Andrew Hodson, seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett, it was -

**Resolved (58:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 11 of the Licensing Act 2003 Committee be approved as follows:**

**(1) that there should continue to be a Cumulative Impact Assessment applied to the area of Birkenhead currently referenced in the Statement of Licensing Policy; and**

**(2) the Draft Statement of Licensing Policy be approved.**

108 **REVISED PENSION BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The seventh matter requiring consideration was in relation to the revised Pensions Board Terms of Reference as recommended by the Pensions Committee at its meeting on 4 November, 2019 (minute 41 refers).

On a motion by Councillor Pat Cleary, seconded by Councillor Geoffrey Watt, it was -

**Resolved (57:0) (Two abstentions) - That the recommendation contained within minute 41 of the Pensions Committee, 4 November, 2019, be approved, as follows, that the revisions to the Pension Board's terms of reference be adopted into the Council's Constitution.**

109 **APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE) INCLUDING RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER**

The eighth matter requiring consideration was in relation to the appointment of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) including Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer as recommended by the Employment and Appointments Committee at its meeting on 23 October, 2019 (minute 9 refers).

On a motion by Councillor Adrian Jones, seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie, it was -

**Resolved (58:0) (One abstention) - That the recommendation contained within minute 9 of the Employment and Appointments Committee, 23 October, 2019 be approved, as follows, that the Interim Chief Executive, Mr Paul Satoor, be appointed to the post of Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, with immediate effect.**

110 **PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chief Executive, Mr Paul Satoor, then addressed the Council and thanked all the Members for his appointment which he considered to be an absolute honour, pleasure and privilege. In his presentation he outlined his reflections since June 2019, the key priorities for the Council and vision for 2025 and key milestones for 2020. Mr Satoor then responded to a number of comments and questions from Members on a variety of issues.