

COUNCIL

Monday, 19 October 2020

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

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

Apologies Councillors S Jones J Stapleton

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

No such declarations were made.

14 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor announced the recent death of former Councillor Bill Davies and invited the Council to observe a minute's silence in his memory.

15 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 28 September, 2020 had been circulated to Members. On a motion by the Civic Mayor seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson it was –

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

16 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that no questions from the public or Members had been submitted.

17 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that no statements had been submitted.

In accordance with Standing Order 11.2 the following four petitions were submitted:

1. Councillor Jo Bird presented a petition from Victoria Harris of Mersey View estates requesting an end to ‘unfair leasehold’.
2. Councillor Karl Greaney presented a petition on behalf of 67 residents of Pasture Avenue regarding changes to local bus service causing isolation.
3. Councillor Tom Anderson presented a petition from 38 residents of Highfield Drive and Duncan Drive in Greasby requesting road repairs
4. Councillor Andrew Hodson presented a petition which was an objection to a planning application.

Resolved – That the petitions be noted and referred to the appropriate Chief Officers in accordance with Standing Order 11.2.

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

In accordance with Standing Order 2 (x) two matters had been submitted for approval by the Council (see minutes 19 and 20 post).

19 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2020/21 - CABINET, 27 JULY 2020**

The first item requiring approval was in relation to a revised capital programme.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson seconded by Councillor Anita Leech it was -

Resolved - That the recommendations contained with minute 108 of Cabinet, 27 July, 2020, be approved as follows:

- (1) additional funding for the schemes referred to in paragraph 3.3 of the report, and;**
- (2) a revised Capital Programme of £131.7m for 2020/21.**

20 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 - CABINET, 27 JULY, 2020

The second item requiring approval was in relation to the Treasury Management Annual Report 2019/20

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson seconded by Anita Leech, it was -

Resolved – That the recommendation contained within minute 113 of Cabinet, 27 July, 2020, be approved as follows:

That the 2019/20 Treasury Management Annual Report be agreed.

21 REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES FOR CONSIDERATION

In accordance with Standing Order 2 (xi), one matter had been submitted for consideration, a recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee of 7 October, 2020.

On motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was -

Resolved - That the Local Plan Steering Sub Committee be removed from political balance requirements in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Housing Act 1989, so that it be constituted in a manner that reflects the membership of the Local Plan Advisory Group, being one member from each political group on the Council.

22 MOTIONS OF NOTICE

Motions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.1 and were determined as detailed in minute 23 to 29 below.

23 MOTION - OVERCOMING COVID FAILURES TO BUILD THE 'TEST AND TRACE' SYSTEM WIRRAL NEEDS

Councillor Janette Williamson moved and Councillor Phil Gilchrist seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

“Council wishes for the success of any current government in tackling the current global pandemic.

Council places on record its thanks and appreciation of all those involved in the fight to contain and tackle the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

However, there are a number of failures that cannot be ignored by Council. Local government is clearly an important player in the fight against the second wave.

However such government support that has been forthcoming by way of funding or access to national track and trace databases has only been secured in recent times and only after repeated requests to ensure local government is better equipped to help control the virus.

Council recognises that its officers have worked tirelessly to secure data from the national Test and Trace Service and to combine local and national data in the best interests of Wirral’s people.

Council considers that the Government’s determination to reorganise Public Health England in the midst of national and local work to be a diversion of energy and capacity that should be focussed on tackling the virus.

Notwithstanding this work, Council believes that the substantial sums awarded to the contractors by the Government are not, to date, providing value for money in the fight against the virus. There remains considerable public suspicion about the role of contractors that have and are being used, a clear need for greater transparency in the way contractors have been appointed and are operating, leading to growing concern that a system intended to secure public confidence has failed to do so.

Council recognises that further introductions of local lockdowns have become necessary, but only because previous attempts by the government to control the virus have failed.

Council believes that the transfer of Test and Trace funding to this and other local authorities, taking full advantage of local knowledge and contacts, would produce greater public trust in the system than can be secured under the arrangements that have been made.

Council believes that the way to improve this is to give funding to council for the extra costs and loss of income it is experiencing, and to give us the powers, support and capacity to conduct locally run testing, tracking and tracing.

Council recommends this be communicated by Group Leaders in the strongest possible way to ministers.

Council further requests that Wirral's MPs take up this issue and that Wirral Council works with the Local Government Association to secure improvements to the system."

Councillor Chris Carubia moved and Councillor Dave Mitchell seconded an amendment submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3, such that after the final paragraph, the following be inserted:

"Council lends its weight to all the background work and representations made recently by the Leader and Officers in conveying the views of Members to secure as much funding as possible to support Wirral's residents through this crisis.

Council is anxious that, as the restrictions do appear likely to be in place for some time, the Government needs to recognise that both individual and family finances will come under increasing pressures, so further funding must be added to the levels announced.

Further, as groups or individuals are identified as falling through these provisions, these issues should also be identified and highlighted.

Representations should be made to Wirral's MPs and Ministers urging them to follow these up in the interest of reducing poverty and hardship."

Following a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 15, and Councillor Williamson having replied, the amendment was put and carried (59:0) (One abstention).

The substantive motion, as amended, was then put and it was -

Resolved (59:0) (One abstention) – That,

Council wishes for the success of any current government in tackling the current global pandemic.

Council places on record its thanks and appreciation of all those involved in the fight to contain and tackle the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

However, there are a number of failures that cannot be ignored by Council.

Local government is clearly an important player in the fight against the second wave.

However such government support that has been forthcoming by way of funding or access to national track and trace databases has only been secured in recent times and only after repeated requests to ensure local government is better equipped to help control the virus.

Council recognises that its officers have worked tirelessly to secure data from the national Test and Trace Service and to combine local and national data in the best interests of Wirral's people.

Council considers that the Government's determination to reorganise Public Health England in the midst of national and local work to be a diversion of energy and capacity that should be focussed on tackling the virus.

Notwithstanding this work, Council believes that the substantial sums awarded to the contractors by the Government are not, to date, providing value for money in the fight against the virus. There remains considerable public suspicion about the role of contractors that have and are being used, a clear need for greater transparency in the way contractors have been appointed and are operating, leading to growing concern that a system intended to secure public confidence has failed to do so.

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Council believes that the transfer of Test and Trace funding to this and other local authorities, taking full advantage of local knowledge and contacts, would produce greater public trust in the system than can be secured under the arrangements that have been made.

Council believes that the way to improve this is to give funding to council for the extra costs and loss of income it is experiencing, and to give us the powers, support and capacity to conduct locally run testing, tracking and tracing.

Council recommends this be communicated by Group Leaders in the strongest possible way to ministers.

Council further requests that Wirral's MPs take up this issue and that Wirral Council works with the Local Government Association to secure improvements to the system.

Council lends its weight to all the background work and representations made recently by the Leader and Officers in conveying the views of

Members to secure as much funding as possible to support Wirral's residents through this crisis.

Council is anxious that, as the restrictions do appear likely to be in place for some time, the Government needs to recognise that both individual and family finances will come under increasing pressures, so further funding must be added to the levels announced.

Further, as groups or individuals are identified as falling through these provisions, these issues should also be identified and highlighted.

Representations should be made to Wirral's MPs and Ministers urging them to follow these up in the interest of reducing poverty and hardship.

At 7.30pm, the Civic Mayor announced that the Council would adjourn for 10 minutes.

The Council resumed at 7.40pm.

24 **MOTION - PROTECTING THE PUBLIC'S SAY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS**

Councillor Stuart Kelly moved and Councillor Dave Mitchell seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Following a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 15, and Councillor Kelly having replied it was then

Resolved -

Council notes the recent Government consultations concerning the operation of the Planning system.

Council notes the response made on 1st October to the first consultation 'Changes to the current planning system' and, in particular, welcomes the Council's response challenging the proposed change to the housing need algorithm which will place additional pressure on the Brownfield First strategy and the change to the small sites threshold for affordable housing which will impact on our ability to secure affordable housing.

Council calls on Government to abandon these proposals. Council further notes the ongoing consultation on the Government White Paper, 'Planning for the Future', which set out proposals on reforms to the planning system; in particular, Council is concerned that the proposals seek to reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications

near them with developers instead being granted automatic rights to build on land identified as 'for growth'.

Council notes that the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by Local Authority Planning Committees, with permission granted to around nine out of 10 applications and that research by the Local Government Association has indicated that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started.

The Royal Institute for British Architects say "these shameful proposals do almost nothing to guarantee the delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes. While they might help to 'get Britain building' – paired with the extension of Permitted Development – there's every chance they could also lead to the creation of the next generation of slum housing. The housing crisis isn't just about numbers, and deregulation won't solve it."

<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/knowledge-landingpage/deregulation-wont-solve-the-housing-crisis-riba-criticises-jenricks-planning-reforms>

The Town and Country Planning Association say. "The complex proposals in the white paper will move permission to the plan making stage reducing democratic oversight and streamlining public consultations. At the same time, the paper is weak on the contribution the planning system must make to health and well-being. It also puts back the date for achieving zero carbon homes to beyond 2025. It seeks to abolish the much criticised duty to cooperate but offers no framework for strategic planning to replace it."

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/news/press-release-ripping-up-the-system-wont-build-the-homes-we-need-tcpa-responds-to-planning-for-the-future-white-paper>

Council believes that existing planning procedures allow for local democratic control over future development and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them. However, these proposals reduce democratic accountability and public scrutiny and significantly reduce the scope for public participation and influence on planning applications within local communities.

Council, therefore, resolves to take part in the consultation in the planning proposals and that this motion be submitted as part of any consultation response.

25 **MOTION - PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

With the consent of the Council, this motion was withdrawn by Councillors Pat Cleary and Chris Cooke, in accordance with Standing Order 15.8.

26 **MOTION - CROSS PARTY UNITY ON THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

Councillor Elizabeth Grey moved and Councillor Pat Cleary seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Following a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 15, and Councillor Grey having replied it was then

Resolved -

This council calls for cross party unity and collaboration in the fight to protect our residents from the rapidly escalating dangers of biodiversity loss and climate breakdown. This Council requests that all elected members put aside short term political gain and focus on the longer term need to reduce the worst effects of environmental damage caused by our current lifestyles. This Council urges all members to work together for the sake of our residents on these most important of issues. Council recognises that difficult decisions will need to be made and there will likely be disruption to our lives as we move from heavily polluting activities to more sustainable lifestyles. Council agrees to work positively and cooperatively in the spirit of our new committee system to support policies that will protect our residents from environmental threats.

27 **MOTION - REDUCING ROAD CASUALTIES**

Councillor Allan Brame moved and Councillor Stuart Kelly seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Following a debate conducted in accordance with Standing Order 15, and Councillor Brame having replied it was then

Resolved -

Council notes that:

- **In the last ten years, there has been no significant decline in the number of people killed and seriously injured on Britain's roads, after decades of reducing casualties.**
- **According to Department of Transport figures, there are still on average five fatalities and 68 serious injuries in England and Wales every day.**

- In the preamble to the consultation published by the Department of Transport in July this year, the Under Secretary of State for Transport said the review sought to ‘build the fairest and most operationally effective enforcement capability in police and other agencies to deliver the best outcome for the safety of all road users’.
- In the same month, the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary published a damning report which predicted an increase in road deaths because,
 - according to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, there has been a 34% cut in funding in real terms for road policing between 2012/3 and 2019/20, leading to a reduction of police officers available for these duties.
 - these officers receive insufficient training and operational support.
 - road policing is ‘seen as less of a priority than it should be’ in most local plans and there is an ‘unclear national strategy.’
- The HM Inspectorate called for urgent action as ‘roads policing is not optional.’
- In September, Merseyside Police and the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership participated for five days in ‘Project EDWARD’ (Every Day Without a Road Death), as part of the welcome initiative to reduce road deaths.

Council resolves to:

- (1) Ask Group Leaders to write to the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Transport, making clear this Council’s position that funding in real terms for road policing should be restored; that the HM Inspectorate’s recommendations be implemented in full as a priority; and that a new national strategy for road policing and safety should be developed.
- (2) Ask the Chief Executive to send copies of this letter to the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Commissioner, the Police and Crime Panel and our local Members of Parliament to seek their support for the Council’s position.
- (3) Ask the Council’s representatives on the Liverpool City Region Police and Crime Panel to request the Panel revisit the local policing plan to ensure that roads policing is sufficiently prioritised.
- (4) Ask that this Motion be referred to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee so that it may review and refresh earlier work that was undertaken on the introduction of 20mph speed limits on all residential roads across the Borough with a view to making progress with their introduction.

28 **MOTION - SAVE OUR LOCAL JOBS AND SERVICES**

Councillor Brian Kenny moved and Councillor Jo Bird seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine, in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter.

Resolved (39:20) (One abstention) – That,

Wirral Council notes:

- 1. Our communities are facing high levels of unemployment and climate change as well as the devastating impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.**
- 2. Instead of “whatever it takes” promised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, this Conservative Government is threatening Wirral Council with further austerity and cuts.**
- 3. Our appreciation and thanks to thousands of Wirral workers who provide essential services - including social care, waste collection and environmental health workers and many more.**
- 4. Our country is facing an unprecedented jobs crisis. The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts that, by the end of this year, nearly one in eight of the UK’s workforce will be unemployed – and some communities on the Wirral already have over 15% unemployment.**
- 5. The need to work together with other Councils and local residents to challenge the Conservative government to provide the necessary resources to save our vital services – and enable secure, sustainable, fulfilling employment that pays at least the Real Living Wage.**
- 6. Urgent measures are needed here and now to protect workers in many sectors from losing their livelihoods by not pulling the plug on job retention measures.**
- 7. Unless ministers fix the current national funding shortfall for local authorities – estimated to be in the region of £10bn – there could be tens of thousands of job losses and catastrophic cuts to local services in England, according to Unison.**
- 8. This government have found £15bn for so called PPE contracts, but without any transparency.**

Wirral Council therefore agrees to:

- (1) Refer this to the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee to consider supporting the “Alliance for Full Employment” to mobilise all the resources of the UK to end the recession and create good, quality jobs.”**
- (2) Ask Group Leaders to urge the government to provide fair funding to local councils in order to keep communities safe and build back better from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.**

- (3) Ask Group Leaders to urge government ministers (in writing and on film) to find additional resources for councils to avoid devastating harm to services that have already suffered ten years of budget cuts.**

29 **MOTION - CANCEL LOCAL AUTHORITY DEBT**

Councillor Jo Bird moved and Councillor Christina Muspratt seconded a Motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine, in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter.

Resolved (39:20) (One abstention) – That,

To help save local services and build back better, this government should cancel local authority debt, just as they cancelled NHS debt.

The financial crisis of local authorities is spiralling out of control as councils struggle to respond to the pandemic. The huge increase in expenditure comes on top of ten years of austerity which has severely weakened local authorities. Austerity is to councils what ‘underlying conditions’ are to people who are vulnerable to the virus. The government has told councils to do ‘whatever it takes’ and they will support them. Yet the funding offered thus far falls well short of spending associated with dealing with the pandemic never mind the big loss of income resulting from the lock-down. The Local Government Association has warned that without “a cast-iron commitment” to cover the coronavirus bill councils will begin to fail. The CEO of CIPFA spoke of “a financial tsunami of reduced income and increased costs”. An unprecedented emergency requires emergency measures. One such measure would be the cancellation of local authority debt held by the Public Works Loans Board, currently over £80 billion. This would provide councils with around £4.5 billion extra spending power a year (the cost of servicing the debt last year).

In itself it would not resolve the funding issues resulting from austerity. There needs to be a return to funding of councils based on an annual assessment of social needs in each locality (abandoned by the coalition government in 2013). However, debt cancellation would be a simple step which would provide significant funding on an annual basis and would help to stabilise council finances. The government itself has set a precedent by cancelling £13.4 billion NHS debt. An unprecedented crisis requires emergency measures. To stave off a collapse of council services the debt held by the Public Works Loans Board should be cancelled. This would give local authorities around £4.5 billion extra income a year. Wirral Council resolves to:

- (1) Ask Group Leaders to contact ministers (in writing and on video) to cancel local authority debt.**
- (2) Refer this matter to the Policy and Resources Committee to consider that the Council support the Campaign for Council Housing's call to Cancel Local Authority debt.**