

COUNCIL – 14 DECEMBER 2009

MATTERS FOR DEBATE

The Council is asked to consider the following motions, submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1), and objections and amendments submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7(2).

The order of business is as determined by the party groups in accordance with Standing Order 5(3) and the times for speeches by Standing Order 12(8) (all other speakers have 3 minutes).

1. MOTION: SUE CHARTERIS LIBRARY INQUIRY

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

Council notes:

- The plan to close eleven Wirral Libraries was announced over twelve months ago by the ruling Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration in a barely concealed and shameful attempt to shut the Wirral public out of the decision making process by avoiding the scrutiny and accountability of its decision at a Local Council Election.
- That the Sue Charteris Library Inquiry report together with its conclusions and recommendations made available to the public on 30th November, was placed in the hands of Council Officers and the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration on 27th July and that Wirral Council Officers on 29th September informed the Liberal Democrat/Labour Administration that the Secretary of State's decision on the Administration's Library Closure Plan was going to be announced on the 1st October.
- That a midnight meeting took place on the 29th September and that the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration, having created so much distress to Wirral residents including some of our most vulnerable citizens and spent so much of Wirral residents own Council Tax on developing and defending the their library closure plan decided not to publicly acknowledge that through their own failings they had got the biggest decision in Wirral's history wrong.
- The contrast between the way the ruling Liberal Democrat/Labour Administration has behaved over their Library Closure Plan and the professional and inclusive way Sue Charteris conducted her Inquiry could not be starker in that her report has laid bare the unwillingness of the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration to listen to anyone who disagrees with them and the confused and incompetent decision making process currently in use by Council Officers and members of the administration.

Council believes the residents of Wirral

- Owe Sue Charteris a huge debt of gratitude as her report has exposed the way this administration has treated the Wirral public and how they disregarded the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.
- Will be disgusted that members of the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration, knowing that their proposals would be deemed to be in breach of its statutory duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, thought only of their own skins and how to protect their own positions by using the cover of secrecy to mask the reasons for carrying out the biggest political 'U' turn in Wirral history and instead of being honest with Wirral residents chose to characterise their decision as a demonstration of 'Decisive Leadership'.
- Will not forgive those Council Officers or members of the Labour/Liberal Democrat Administration who have brought such a stinging repudiation from Sue Charteris or forget that Sue Charteris' Public Inquiry has exposed them for:
 1. Making proposals that were in breach of the Council's statutory duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964,
 2. Failing to make an assessment of local needs before deciding to close 11 libraries
 3. Specific needs for adults were not addressed. These include the specific requirements for older people, disabled people, unemployed people, and those living in deprived areas.
 4. Failing to demonstrate that it had due regard to the general requirements of children which Sue Charteris considered to be a breach of its statutory duties.
 5. Taking the decision to close 11 of its libraries in the absence of a strategic plan for or review of the Library Service.
 6. Making a decision without a clear understanding of the extent and range of services currently being provided in the libraries.
 7. Making a decision, which Sue Charteris said was better described as an indication of intent rather than a fully worked up plan, risked being a partial response to need that would disadvantage relatively isolated and deprived communities and was therefore considered to be a further breach in relation to the needs of deprived communities.
 8. The absence of an adequate plan for and commitment to a comprehensive outreach service.
 9. The Council displayed a lack of logic around why some facilities were recommended for closure and not others.

10. Having identified an area of need but subsequently chose to ignore this information:

11. Failing to meet its own standards in terms of a reasonable distance to travel.

Council demands:

(1) An annual library service report be produced by Wirral MBC and submitted every year for the next five years and instructs the Chief Executive to ensure that the report is circulated to the members of a Wirral wide Advisory Group and made available to the public of Wirral.

(2) That the Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council write to Sue Charteris to thank her for the inclusive way she conducted the Public Inquiry and for producing such a clear and unambiguous report.

(3) That the Labour Leader and Liberal Democrat Deputy Leaders of the Council at long last issue an equally clear and unambiguous apology on behalf of themselves and their Groups, to Wirral residents Library staff and Library users for making a decision, so bereft of the use of evidence or common sense, to close eleven Libraries and seeking to hide the reasons for reversing this decision from them.

(4) That the Leader of the Liberal Democrats acknowledges that former Wirral Mayors Councillors Pat Williams and Phil Gilchrist have been vindicated by Sue Charteris' report and unreservedly apologises for their public humiliation

(5) That as the Labour/Liberal Democrat Cabinet coalition's decision making process has been exposed for what it is, lacking an evidence base and being incompetent, it has lost any moral authority and is unworthy of any lingering trust from Wirral residents it should summon up what remnants of honour it can salvage from this whole sorry episode and resign immediately.

Right of reply: Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

2. MOTION: RESPONSE TO STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE ON THE LIBRARIES INQUIRY

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

(1) Council welcomes the statement by the Secretary of State on the libraries inquiry and the fact that it does not find Wirral in breach of its statutory duty.

(2) Council also welcomes the National Library Review launched by the minister, Margaret Hodge, on December 2nd with a series of essays designed to provoke debate on the national future of the library service. Council notes that in her contribution the minister outlined the problems libraries are facing, including steadily declining numbers of users and the major challenges presented by rapidly changing technology and the advent of e-books. Council confirms that it will be watching very

closely to see what kind of recommendations emerge and what lessons we can learn for the future.

(3) Council also recognises that Wirral's original plans to invest £20m in new and modernised neighbourhood centres was a response to some of the challenges outlined by the minister, with plans to co-locate with other services, install the latest technology, provide community space for activities, open longer and more user friendly hours, and create a much more widespread outreach service.

(4) Council believes that the decision to rescind the original plans, which was welcomed by the Secretary of State, has provided the necessary time to take stock of the situation, wait for any national guidance, and consider carefully the best long term future for Wirral's library service.

(5) However, Council believes there are both winners and losers in this situation. Those who lobbied to keep their local library open, have what they want, but the silent majority who do not use their library, who do not want to see their council tax increase, and who might have used one of the new neighbourhood centres because they were more attractive, more conveniently located and open longer hours are clearly the losers.

(6) Council recognises that the decision to rescind the original plans was also not without serious budgetary consequences, costing £2.3m next year, which is the equivalent of a 2% Council Tax increase, and another £2.4m over the next three years for major repairs which will mean either increased council tax levels or cuts in services elsewhere.

(7) Council is acutely aware that between 2011 and 2014 this Council will need to save a minimum of over £67m and that the limited resources the Council has will need to be shared out to meet a whole host of demands, some of which are literally matters of life and death.

(8) Council believes we will have no option but to change and that continued opposition to any form of change will seriously damage the future of the borough and drive away potential investors. Council therefore welcomes any national debate which creates a climate in which change is welcomed as a way forward, rather than a threat to what we have now.

(9) In contrast, Council condemns the irresponsibility of those who play on people's natural fears of change to further their own political ends, and who pretend that our services can continue to operate just as they do now without any consequences for the future.

(10) Council calls on the Conservatives to come clean and tell the voters just how they intend to balance the books in the difficult times ahead.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Bob Moon (3 minutes)

Add to end of paragraph (1)

Council also notes the publication of the Inquiry Report. Council notes that this brings to an end a regrettably prolonged period of uncertainty concerning the future of libraries, but recognises that this in part arose from the duty of confidentiality imposed on the Council by the Secretary of State.

Delete paragraphs (5) and (6) and replace with

(5) Council agrees with the National Review essayists who believe that change is needed to ensure the long term future and shape of library services. However, Council recognises the need to build a new consensus on developing a library service that both meets people's needs and is affordable.

(6) Council commits to keeping all libraries open until such time as the completion of the Government's National Library Review and the publication of its outcome. Council commits to the fullest public consultation on the development of sustainable plans thereafter.

(7) Council notes that keeping all libraries open will result in an additional cost of £2.3m to Wirral's Council Tax Payers through costs incurred and not budgeted for in the current financial year and the ongoing cost of maintaining the existing library service in the next financial year.

Renumber paragraph (7) as (8) – delete rest of motion and add

(9) Council resolves to ensure that future large scale change projects are subject to more robust methods for the development of ideas, the sharing of those ideas with stakeholders, and for the views of stakeholders to be allowed to properly influence the shape of final decisions, and agrees to take into account the issues raised in the Inquiry Report in so far as they relate to these matters.

(10) Council believes that local authorities, who are accountable to local people, are ultimately best placed to take these difficult decisions over the provision of local services including libraries; balancing available resources and the needs of local people. And calls on all Parties to be straight with the people on how they plan to exercise these difficult judgements in the tough times ahead.

Right of reply: Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

3. MOTION: CARBON BUDGET

Proposed by Councillor Gill Gardiner (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Simon Holbrook (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes:

- (a) The excellent work already being carried out to reduce carbon emissions by the council and across the borough through the launch of the CRed scheme and its aim to achieve a 60% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2025.
- (b) The sign-up and commitment of the council to the national 10:10 initiative, which encourages individuals and organisations to save 10% during 2010.
- (c) That the Carbon Reduction Commitment, a mandatory emissions trading scheme affecting large local authorities with an annual electricity bill of more than £500,000 will come into force from April 2010.
- (d) The launch in September 2009 of the Scottish Government's carbon budget, linking greenhouse gas emissions with the environmental impact of total government spending.
- (e) The publication by DECC in July 2009 of the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, setting out how the UK will meet the 34% cut in emissions on 1990 levels by 2020, set out in The Budget.
- (f) The publication by CLG in July 2009 of the Strengthening Local Democracy Consultation, which suggests that local authorities could have a much greater role to play in tackling climate change through local carbon budgets.

(2) Council believes that:

- (a) Setting an annual carbon budget for each department and building a clearer picture of the environmental impact of Council spending will help to meet the local and national carbon reduction targets that have been set out above.
- (b) Strong leadership is needed to ensure that financial and carbon budgeting is fully integrated into mainstream financial management and business planning activity.
- (c) There are financial savings to be made through procurement of energy efficient and low carbon contracts, goods and services.

Therefore, Council resolves:

(1) To instruct the Director of Technical Services and the Sustainability Unit to establish the Council's carbon footprint and quantify the number of tonnes of CO₂ released as a direct result of Council operations for 2010 onwards, and to instruct the Director of Finance to bring forward proposals for quantifying CO₂ emissions as part of the procurement process for new council contracts and other spend from April 2011.

(2) To instruct the Director of Technical Services and the Sustainability Unit to work with the Director of Finance (in conjunction with other Chief Officers) to prepare carbon budgets detailing carbon emissions and carbon efficiency targets for each department to be presented at Budget Cabinet and Council alongside the Council's financial budget.

(3) To instruct the Director of Technical Services to report to Cabinet on progress made regarding the carbon budget. This report to include measures and projects to reduce carbon emissions, including an analysis to show progress being made by department and key service areas.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis (3 minutes)

Add after (1)(f)

(g) That 15,000 people have travelled to Copenhagen, to the CO2 Climate Change Summit (COP15), emitting 41,000 tonnes of CO2.

And after (2)(c)

(d) Council therefore requests that the Director of Finance reports the likely costs of introducing Carbon Budgeting, including staff time.

Right of reply: Councillor Gill Gardiner (7 minutes)

4. OBJECTION: MINUTE 221 (CABINET – 9 DECEMBER) GOVERNANCE REVIEW – PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Moved by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

Delete recommendation and insert:

(1) Council believes the reason residents stand for election to the Council in the first place is not to sit simply scrutinising the decisions made by an elected Mayor or Leader and their Cabinet but to listen to what the public tell us and make decisions that will improve the lot of the local community we serve and benefit the people of Wirral as a whole.

(2) Council believes the two options consulted upon have asked the people of Wirral to seek a 'least worst option' as both systems perpetuate the 'elected dictatorship' of an all powerful Executive system which, as evidence has demonstrated, has served the people of Wirral so badly.

(3) Council notes that a new Conservative Government would, as set out in the Conservative Party Localism Policy Document and at the Conservative Party Conference, offer the choice for Wirral Council to introduce governance arrangements that would make the full Council the key decision making body. The Council would be served by Committees with, names and responsibilities that residents can understand with the power and authority, if consensus is achieved, to make decisions affecting their service area.

(4) Council welcomes the opportunity for all Councillors to be involved in making real decisions on matters that effect their residents, and being held accountable for them.

Noting that a General Election must be held within the next six months, Council instructs:

- I. The Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State explaining the Council's desire for a governance system containing the key elements outlined above and requesting a deferment of the requirement to select one of the options laid out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- II. On receipt of approval to a deferment the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management develop arrangements (in consultation with the Wirral public, Party Leaders and Council members) proposals that contain the key Council Governance principles contained in this amendment, supplemented with measures to improve public participation in decision making through more inclusive arrangements and direct democracy, that will allow the Council to present the agreed proposals to a new Government as soon as it is elected.
- III. In consequence of Governance changes that would arise from (ii) above, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management (in consultation with the Wirral public, Party Leaders and Council members) conduct a thorough review of staffing and budgets in order to:
 - Better deploy the Council's Officers to support a Council decision making structure which is more aware of Wirral residents needs, open to the public's views and aspirations and inclusive in its nature.
 - Reduce the total budget for the Council's governance arrangements (including Members IT, member training and Councillor Allowances including Special Responsibility Allowances).

Right of reply: Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 Minutes)

5. MOTION: WIRRAL COUNCIL DELIVERS FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Jean Stapleton (3 minutes)

(1) This Council recognises the many excellent achievements which the authority has delivered over the past three years either directly or in partnership. The following achievements are those about which the Council can be particularly proud:

- 150 new apprenticeships focussed on young people not in education, employment or training.
- Phase 2 of the regeneration of New Brighton amounting to £60m.
- 270 new jobs secured at Tulip.
- £20m new secondary school in Woodchurch.

- £12m new primary care facility at Victoria Central Health Centre.
- Phase 3 Children's Centres announced, bringing the total number to 21.
- 4 new super youth clubs to be open six nights per week announced (1 in each parliamentary constituency).
- £4.8m secured for improving school buildings and equipment.
- Wirral has best refuse and recycling rates in Merseyside.
- Major Wirral Waters development has progressed to the planning stage.

(2) The above clearly demonstrates that Wirral is a 'can do' Council which has delivered excellent outcomes for local residents while at the same time reining in council tax increases so Wirral has now dropped right down the Council tax league from having one of the highest Council Tax levels to one of the lowest.

(3) Council acknowledges the hard work which officers from both the Council and other agencies have contributed to this excellent record and thanks all of those involved.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Mountney (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor John Hale (3 minutes)

Add paragraph

(4) Despite the outstanding work carried out by officers and partners alike it is important to recognise that the recent CAA Area Assessment reported:

“that the area has a relatively small, low value economy which is growing slower than other parts of Merseyside, the North West and the rest of England”

“and that the number of people claiming job seekers allowance has risen by 60% since April 2008, with some areas of the Borough having levels of unemployment as high as 12%.”

By recognising these facts we are not only better positioned as a Council to respond to the poor performance of our local economy moving forward but also able to learn from our previous decisions looking back.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Gill Gardiner (3 minutes)

Add the following bullet points to the end of paragraph (1):

- The number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents on Wirral reduced from 37 in 2005 to the lowest ever recorded figure of 14 in 2008.
- Introduction of advisory 20mph speed limits to residential areas across Wirral.
- Achieved significant reductions in the Council's carbon footprint through ongoing schemes such as boiler replacements, building insulation, awareness raising,

street lighting efficiency, solar water heating scheme at Europa Pools, biomass heating at the Floral Pavilion, staff travel and agile working schemes.

- Invested in a Sustainability Unit and CRed Wirral to promote carbon reduction across the borough.
- The largest delegation to local communities of centrally held funds through the 'You Decide' and 'Funds For You' initiatives which include local decisions on highways and environmental schemes
- The achievement of level 3 of the equality standard for local government.

Right of reply: Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

6. MOTION: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Proposed by Councillor Alan Taylor (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Frank Doyle (3 minutes)

This Council notes:

(1) The publication in November 2009 of the Prison Reform Trust report, *Making Amends: restorative youth justice in Northern Ireland*, which reveals that reoffending rates were much lower when offenders were involved in restorative justice schemes and calls for the youth justice system to prioritise restorative justice, whereby young offenders face their victims.

(2) The excellent work being carried out by Youth Offending Service to prevent and reduce offending, protect the public and provide restorative justice to victims of crime by encouraging young people and their families to take responsibility for their behaviour.

(3) The excellent work being carried out by Merseyside Probation Trust with offenders on Community Payback to provide free labour to local communities as offenders pay back for the crimes they have committed.

(4) The increasing number of local authority and police areas, including Cheshire Police, Thames Valley Police, North Liverpool Community Justice Centre, South Yorkshire Community Justice Panels, that operate effective methods of restorative justice.

(5) That a leading Conservative think-tank, The Centre for Social Justice, has called for a Restorative Justice Act and expansion of Restorative Justice conferencing, training of police in restorative disposals and a national Restorative Justice Agency as core way in which both policing and prisons should be reformed.

(6) Liberal Democrat policy that minor offences and anti-social behaviour should be dealt with by Community Justice Panels in every town, facilitating restorative justice where offenders recognise the effects of their actions and make amends to their victims, where victims are amenable, alongside a strengthening of the probation service to enforce community sentences.

Therefore, Council resolves to request the Local Criminal Justice Delivery Board to report to Members, including the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Evaluating the restorative justice pilot due to commence in 2010, led by the Youth Offending Service and run out of the Wirral Custody Suite, assessing its practical application and impact on re-offending rates, with a view to;

- (a) Bringing forward proposals to establish formalised restorative justice processes in Wirral.
- (b) Evaluating the feasibility of establishing Community Justice Panels in Wirral.

Right of reply: Councillor Alan Taylor (7 minutes)

7. MOTION: CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS

Proposed by Councillor Lesley Rennie (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Gerry Ellis (3 minutes)

Following major incidents throughout the country where fire has taken life, wrecked homes, destroyed business and local communities along with the impact fire has on the environment.

This Council fully supports the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority and the National Fire Sprinkler Network in promoting the benefits and awareness of installing sprinkler systems in public buildings, schools, care homes, commercial premises, and residential properties in Merseyside and throughout the UK.

Sources of information stated below, highlight the need to raise awareness both locally, regionally and nationally of the impact fire has on our communities and the need for urgent and immediate action in bringing about a change in the current legislation.

A recent report from the BBC claims, almost half of new school buildings in England do not have fire safety sprinkler systems.

The government issued guidance two years ago saying sprinklers should be fitted in almost all new schools but 43% of schools to have been re-built or refurbished under the multi-billion pound Building Schools for the Future programme lack sprinklers.

Leading Insurance broker, Zurich Insurance say fewer than 500 out of the 32,000 schools in the UK have them. Every week 20 schools are destroyed or damaged by fire.

In one fire, at Tideway Community School in Newhaven, East Sussex in 2005, 40 classrooms were damaged. The school was rebuilt at a cost of £10.8m, the new buildings contained sprinklers.

Although the number of arson attacks fell slightly last year the cost of the damage rose to £65m. The government has said it expects sprinklers to be fitted in almost all new school buildings. But figures obtained by the BBC from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) show many local authorities are deciding not to fit them.

The Chief Fire Officers Association says “local authorities which choose not to fit them are putting the safety of pupils and staff at risk. It is calling for the government to make sprinklers mandatory in all new school buildings”.

Although the provision of sprinklers is not a requirement of the building regulations, education authorities should request that a risk assessment be undertaken to assess the validity of providing sprinklers in BSF schemes.

The Welsh Assembly insists on sprinklers being fitted in all new school buildings which it funds and has provided money to fit them in existing schools most at risk of arson.

In Scotland a working group will advise ministers later this year on changes to school building safety regulations, including any move to make sprinkler systems mandatory.

It is proven that the initial financial outlay is relatively small and will be recouped through lower insurance premiums.

(Source) Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Results from a recent survey:

- 88% of respondents believe sprinklers save lives and 83% now think sprinklers react quickly to fire
- 83% of people think that sprinklers offer design freedoms and flexibilities
- 60% of respondents are now likely to request sprinkler installation
- 87% of all respondents felt that insurance premiums should be reduced for properties fitted with sprinkler systems
- As a result of the Kent Fire & Rescue Service 'Safer with Sprinklers' campaign, 61% of people have now advised others about the benefits of sprinklers
- A very positive change in perception is that now 65% of people think sprinklers should be fitted into the homes of vulnerable people and schools, compared to 46% in 2007

Many negative perceptions about sprinklers have decreased since 2007. Fewer people now think that they flood buildings and are ugly and expensive.

As peoples' attitudes towards sprinklers have become more positive, cost would appear to be the remaining major factor when considering sprinklers and their installation. Perceived installation and maintenance cost is a factor we will continue trying to address, by promoting the likely cost of specifying sprinklers, the use of low cost systems and by offering grants towards sprinkler systems in properties where vulnerable people are or will be living.

Sprinklers - the facts

- Effective: Fire sprinklers are by far the most efficient and effective safety devices available, having a better than 97% success rate world-wide.
- Life Safety Record: In the UK statistics show that there has never been a multiple loss of life in a building fully covered by sprinklers.
- Early alarm: More than 50 per cent of all fire casualties are either young, old or physically incapacitated. In conjunction with smoke alarms, fire sprinklers sound the alarm when they go off so they increase the time people have to escape or be rescued.
- Inexpensive: Residential fire sprinklers cost less than two per cent of an average new house – or about the price of good carpeting.
- Reliability: Sprinklers are designed to last for 50 years and the chance of accidental operation, due to manufacturers' defects, in service is *1:16,000,000 (one in sixteen million). Less than your chance of winning the lottery!
- Operational facts: Each sprinkler head is individually triggered by the heat of the fire and the system will gain control of the fire long before the Fire and Rescue Service is called. Only the sprinkler head nearest to the fire goes off - NOT all of them.
- Limited water damage: Sprinklers use much less water than the Fire and Rescue Service. Because the sprinkler system tackles the fire immediately, it only has a small fire to deal with. A fire sprinkler uses between 1/25th and 1/100th of the water used by each fire hose – so, in the event of a fire, sprinklers will minimise water damage.
- Easy to install: Modern residential sprinklers are small, neat and unobtrusive and visitors are seldom able to spot them – concealed versions are now available.
- Construction trade-offs: Sprinklers can save on construction costs because, under the Building Regulations, larger compartments or rooms may be constructed. Structural fire protection may also be reduced.

We therefore support and encourage the campaign that all local authorities, Social Landlords and Businesses to voluntarily include sprinklers systems in any future investment programme such as, schools, care homes, public buildings, and houses of multiple occupation and family homes, commercial or retail premises.

As such Wirral Council undertakes to:

- (1) Review the present Building Schools for the Future schemes.
- (2) Review the Capital Works Programme for Kitchens/Dining Rooms in Schools scheduled for 2009/10.

(3) Review the Schools and Early Years Capital Works Programme for future years.

(4) Review the Leisure Service Capital Works Programme for future years, and any other public facility where sprinkler systems will improve public safety and protect the fabric of the building.

Council requests that the terms of this motion are forwarded to all Merseyside MPs, Social Landlords, Lord McKenzie of Luton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DCLG with responsibility for Buildings Regulations, Shahid Malik MP, Minister of State with responsibility for the Fire Service and Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority to express our support for a change in the current legislation and engage their support for this important campaign.

Right of reply: Councillor Lesley Rennie (7 minutes)

8. MOTION: CONTROL OF DANGEROUS DOGS

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor John Salter (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes that legal provisions concerning dogs were, in particular, enacted under the Dogs Act 1871; the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991; and, inter alia, the 1997 amendments.

(2) Whilst the government is to be applauded for introducing control provisions for particular breeds experience demonstrates that tragedies continue to occur in private premises and open spaces.

(3) Council notes that individuals with ill intent are easily able to acquire dogs that can be trained as 'attack' instruments. Irrespective of intent anybody can acquire dogs that are not, under extant legal provisions, deemed to be dangerous but may nevertheless through training for aggression, through ignorance or failure of training, or through neglect or any other reason, become hazardous in domestic surroundings or public places.

(4) The Government is therefore called upon to take urgent measures to:

1. re-define the meaning of 'dangerous';
2. re-consider the range of breeds that may be deemed dangerous;
3. enact stricter measures of control; and
4. consider the feasibility and viability of re-introducing licensing of individuals seeking dog ownership.

Right of reply: Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

9. MOTION: ID CARDS

Proposed by Councillor Chris Teggin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Tom Harney (3 minutes)

Council notes that the Government is pressing ahead with imminent plans to roll out the Home Office voluntary scheme for ID cards across the North West region from early next year.

Council notes that the existing policy of the Wirral Council is that it is opposed to the introduction of ID cards and the associated database and that funding would be better spent on additional police officers.

Council further notes that:

- (i) Despite arguments by Labour ministers to the contrary, ID cards and the database will not prevent crime, terrorism or illegal immigration.
- (ii) The introduction of ID cards would fundamentally change the relationship between the citizen and the state
- (iii) The Prime Minister's speech to his party conference sought to give the impression that ID cards would not be introduced, at the same time as his government was clearly preparing for these pilot schemes.

Therefore, Council resolves to:

- (1) Reiterate its current opposition to the ID card scheme and any introduction of this in Wirral.
- (2) Refuse to co-operate with any plans to promote the card scheme. This will include refusal to allow any council premises to be used for promotional events or meetings and refusal to use any of Wirral council's communications channels to provide information about the scheme.
- (3) Work with organisations campaigning against the ID card scheme such as NO2ID to raise awareness among Wirral residents of the civil liberties implications of the ID card and database scheme.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes (3 minutes)

Delete all of the existing text and replace with the following:

- (1) Council notes that the Identity Card scheme currently being rolled out is purely voluntary and it will be up to individuals to decide whether or not to apply.
- (2) Council notes the arguments in favour of identity cards, i.e. they will:-
 - help protect people from identity fraud and theft

- ensure that people are who they say they are
- tackle illegal working and immigration abuse
- disrupt the use of false and multiple identities by criminals and those involved in terrorist activity
- ensure free public services are only used by those entitled to them
- enable easier access to public services

(3) Council recognises that given that it will ultimately be up to each citizen to decide whether or not they wish to apply for an identity card, it would be perverse if the Council was prohibited from providing residents with information about the scheme as we would with other benefits and entitlements.

Right of reply: Councillor Chris Teggin (7 minutes)

10. MOTION: ELDERLY CARE

Proposed by Councillor Geoffrey Watt (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor James Keeley (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes that 2.4 million pensioners currently receive an average of £60 per week from Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

(2) Council is concerned to note that plans by the Government to create a National Care Service will be funded by the withdrawal of these benefits.

(3) These benefits are a vital support for disabled pensioners and give them the chance to have an independent life with the freedom to tailor their care to their needs.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Denise Roberts (3 minutes)

Delete everything after paragraph 1 and insert the following as a continuation of first paragraph:

Though it recognises that Social Security Benefits can contribute to promoting independence for some, they do not go far enough in addressing the complexities of providing for the future care needs of an increasing ageing population, and also for younger adults with care needs.

(2) Council therefore welcomes the opportunity through the year long consultation on the Green Paper "Shaping the Future of Care Together" to give a Wirral response to it, which represents the views of users of service, their carers, the voluntary and community sector and staff, and also the all-party response of the Local Government Association, Community Well-Being Board, which welcomed the personalised approach to service provision in the future.

(3) Council endorses the view held by ADSS, LGA and service user advocates that with increased numbers needing services, and the requirement to have services tailored more to suit individuals, a more radical approach to funding is required than the present system allows for.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Councillor Ann Bridson (7 minutes)

Seconded by: Councillor Chris Teggins (3 minutes)

Delete paragraphs (2) and (3) and replace with:

(2) Council supports the principle of free personal care but believes this is best delivered through local councils rather than through the creation of a National Care Service.

(3) Council condemns the Prime Minister for failing to back his new policy with any new money and in particular notes that £250m of the £670m estimated cost is to be financed from existing Local Council Budgets.

(4) Council believes that free personal care must also align with the policy of personal budgets, which puts the individual's freedom and choice to live an independent life at the heart of the care system. Council believes that any withdrawal of Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance to fund a set of prescribed entitlements would be incompatible with these objectives.

(5) Council authorises officers to bring these concerns to the attention of the appropriate Government Ministers.

Right of reply: Councillor Geoffrey Watt (7 minutes)

11. MOTION: ROAD SAFETY AROUND SCHOOLS

Proposed by Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan (3 minutes)

Council notes that measures have already been taken to reduce speed limits around schools and now asks Head Teachers and School Governors to work closely with the Director of Technical Services to undertake programmes of Education, Training and Publicity relating to Road Safety in the vicinity of Schools and to promote sustainable travel to reduce congestion and parking in the vicinity of schools.

Right of reply: Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

12. MOTION: PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGNS

Proposed by Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Geoffrey Watt (3 minutes)

(1) Council welcomes the work of charities, voluntary organisations and the public sector in Wirral to tackle issues related to public health, including activities around World Aids Day on December 1st.

(2) Council is therefore concerned to note that the number of public health consultants and registrars has been reduced.

(3) Council also notes there has been no significant public health campaign to warn of the dangers of HIV among younger people and high-risk groups since the 1980s.

(4) Council therefore calls on the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Health and the Chief Executive of the NHS to express these concerns and request urgent attention.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Delete everything after paragraph 1 and insert the following:

(2) Council notes the difficulties currently being experienced at national level in recruiting Directors of Public Health, but welcomes the fact that the more recently formed Public Health Teams which are multi-disciplinary, and made up of highly qualified health professionals, are working effectively to tackle public health issues across the spectrum.

(3) Further, though Council is pleased to note that the incidence of HIV / Aids is low and reducing in Wirral, there is a continued need to educate young people in the dangers of harmful and risky sexual behaviour, which could result in unwanted conceptions and the contracting of sexually transmitted diseases, and therefore welcomes the work of front line staff in the Children and Young People's Department and the PCTs Health Services in Schools to promote a responsible approach to sexual health by delivering the "Under 19's Sexual Health Policy."

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Jean Quinn (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann Bridson (3 minutes)

Delete paragraph (2) and replace with:

(2) In addition, Council welcomes the increase in the number of public health consultants in Wirral in the last 12 months

After paragraph (3) insert new paragraph:

(4) Council believes that the education of young people should include sensible advice on family planning, safe sexual practice and contraception within heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Re-number paragraph (4) as (5) and add to end of that paragraph:

“, asks the Director of Children and Young People’s Service to ensure the education of young people in these areas is appropriately delivered and requests that the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee seek a report on HIV in Wirral and what measures are being taken to address the issues raised.”

Right of reply: Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

13. MOTION: ACHIEVING LEVEL 3 EQUALITY STANDARD

Proposed by Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (3 minutes)

(1) Council welcomes the fact that Wirral Council’s commitment to promoting equality, both as an employer and as a provider of services, has been recognised in a recent Government assessment which awarded it a level 3 rating of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

(2) Council notes that this is a nationally recognised standard and demonstrates that the Council has developed and implemented the necessary systems and processes to promote equality of opportunity for all.

(3) Council congratulates all those who have worked so hard to achieve this recognition, including the work that went into hosting two very successful Diversity Days, attracting more than 1,200 visitors, and supporting community events such as Black History Month awards, an inter-community football tournament, the Youth Voice Conference and events for Chinese elders, Bangladeshi and Black African community members.

(4) Council now urges all its staff to build on this success and work towards the goal of achieving an “excellent” rating within the next three years under the newly introduced Equality Framework.

(5) In particular, Council asks all Chief Officers to ensure that support for equality and diversity are high on their agendas and that they do everything possible to encourage further progress in these areas.

Right of reply: Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

14. MOTION: SURE START

Proposed by Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes that the Director of Children's services intends to seek a cut of £300,000 to the money allocated this year for the support given to families in Wirral through the Sure Start initiative.

(2) Council welcomes the decision by all three Party leaders to maintain Sure Start after the next General Election and therefore regrets the cuts to the programme in Wirral.

(3) Council believes that support for families, in particular with the important early years of a child's life, is essential to improve the health and wellbeing of a family and wider society.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Delete all of the existing text and replace with the following:

(1) Council believes that support for families, in particular for the important early years of children's lives, is essential to improve the health and wellbeing of society in general. For this reason Council applauds the Government's Sure Start initiative and the funding passed to Wirral Council which has enabled 21 Children's Centres to be established across the Borough.

(2) Council rejects the allegation made by the Conservative Group that Wirral's Sure Start programme has been cut. No Sure Start Centre has had any funding reduced and no future plans are threatened in any way. This is scaremongering of the worst kind. The Government provided full year funding for the second phase of new Children's Centres and any funding left over in that year because the agreed timescale meant new buildings were completed part way through the year, or the full complement of staff were only appointed part way through the year, has been used to fund other activities for under 5s that are also eligible for Sure Start grant.

(3) Council notes that the saving occurs because the Council has been able to use outstanding Sure Start grant in that year for activities for which it would otherwise have had to find additional funding for from within its own budget.

(4) Council notes that Wirral's investment in Sure Start stands in stark contrast to the national Conservative position as set out in their 'Helping new families' policy document which commits the Conservatives to cutting £200 million per year from Children's Centres to spend elsewhere. This would mean cutting 19.5% from Sure Start budgets - the equivalent of almost one in five Children's Centres being forced to close. In Wirral, if a Conservative government were elected, this could mean the closure of up to four Sure Start Centres.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Peter Reisdorf (7 minutes)

Seconded by: Councillor Sarah Quinn (3 minutes)

Replace paragraph (1) with new text:

(1) Council welcomes the expansion of the Children's Centre Programme and the fact that Sure Start grant funding for Wirral has increased significantly, from £8m to £10m over the period 2006-10.

Delete all after 'General Election' in paragraph (2).

Run remainder of paragraphs (2) and (3) together and renumber as (2)

Insert:

(3) Council endorses the proposed phase 3 extension of Sure Start to include centres at Greasby Library, Pensby Park, Black Horse Hill infant School, and Grove Street School representing an investment of £5.2m.

(4) Council further notes that 17,404 under 5's will be able to access and benefit from this and previous investments by 2011.

(5) Council condemns those elements within the Conservative Party spreading scare stories and rumours designed to de-stabilise the Sure Start programme and calls on them to stop using families and children as political footballs.

Right of reply: Councillor Leah Fraser (7 minutes)

15. MOTION: TOWN MEADOW LANE SHOPS AND MAISONNETTES

Proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Williams (3 minutes)

(1) This Council notes with concern that the site of the shops and maisonettes in Town Meadow Lane Moreton has been allowed to fall into disrepair and dereliction, with all the maisonettes being empty and only three shops in the parade trading.

(2) Council further notes that this housing and commercial stock transferred to Wirral Partnership homes as part of the Council's Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) programme in 2005.

(3) Council also notes that Wirral Partnership Homes, with the support of this Council were able to secure grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency, to redevelop a similar site in Woodchurch with 10 houses and 4 bungalows, following the stock transfer.

(4) Council therefore requests, as a matter of urgency, that Council Officers, working with Wirral Partnership Homes come up with proposals to secure grant funding, to allow a redevelopment scheme to take place at this location, including the provision of new shop premises for the existing traders.

(5) In order to ensure that any new development fits in with the existing streetscene, and is acceptable to the local community Council also requests that Wirral Partnership Homes carries out full open and transparent consultation with all stakeholders, including the existing traders, local residents, representatives of the residents' association and Ward Councillors prior to the implementation of any new scheme.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor George Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Delete all of the existing text and replace with the following:

(1) Council is reminded that originally there was a scheme for the refurbishment of these properties by another Housing Association in late 2000, for which conditional Housing Corporation funding had been secured. However the local community, led by Ward Councillors, subsequently rejected the redevelopment proposals.

(2) Council recognises the financial pressures that the Housing Association movement is currently experiencing. These pressures have arisen from the constraints imposed on rent increases for next year thereby reducing rental income. This was the subject of a Notice of Motion to a previous Council meeting proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley to keep rents to an absolute minimum, recognising the difficult financial position many tenants are currently experiencing. However, this reduction in rental income also reduces the Associations' ability to borrow capital to undertake the required improvements to these properties.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Alan Taylor (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Simon Holbrook (3 minutes)

Delete from paragraph (4) the words:

“that Council Officers, working with Wirral Partnership Homes come up with proposals to secure grant funding”

And replace with the words:

“that Council Officers support Wirral Partnership Homes to come up with proposals to secure grant funding”

Right of reply: Councillor Chris Blakeley (7 minutes)