

Council – 13 December 2010

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(4) and the times for speeches by Standing Order 12(8) (all other speakers have 3 minutes).

1. MOTION: PROTECTION OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS OF WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

- (1) Council believes that caring for vulnerable adults with learning and physical difficulties is one of the most important functions of a fair and responsible society.
- (2) Council thanks the Care Quality Commission for their report exposing the failures within the Council's provision of adult social services.
- (3) Council believes that this failure to protect our most vulnerable residents is a shameful failure of responsibility of senior Labour Councillors and that, by this failure, Wirral is reportedly the poorest-performing adult social services department in the country.
- (4) Council welcomes the Action Plan being implemented by the Interim Director of Adult Social Services to correct the failings of the past and gives its backing to the measures being undertaken by him, and the new Administration.
- (5) Council thanks the Liberal Democrat Cabinet Member and the members of the Interim Executive Board who meet regularly to ensure the changes identified by the CQC are implemented.
- (6) Council welcomes the contribution made to the consultation 'Wirral's Future' by adults and users of adult social services, their carers and families and voluntary, community and faith organisations.
- (7) Council calls upon the former Labour Leader of the Council and the former Cabinet Member for Social Care and Inclusion to apologise to Council and the people of Wirral for their abject failure in the conduct of their responsibilities.
- (8) Council believes this failure to deliver care and failure to apologise since publication of the CQC Report, demonstrates that Wirral Labour is incapable of caring for the most vulnerable.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Moira McLaughlin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Brian Kenny (3 minutes)

Delete all after paragraph (1). Insert:

- (2) Council recognises that there were failures in the provision of services for those with Learning Disabilities, and that the then Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and the then Leader of the Council both apologised publicly to service users for those failures and welcomed the recommendations of the Care Quality Commission.
- (3) Council recognises that criticisms centred around a failure to modernise at speed those services which are more traditional, such as day services, and on a continued reliance on residential care, rather than more community based alternatives.
- (4) Council believes that, while this has been recognised as a failure to provide the most up to date and stimulating alternatives, it arose from an attempt to tailor the pace of change to one which maintains the confidence of this vulnerable group of users and carers, and recognises the reasons why some are fearful and resistant to change. Council accepts that this slower progress has led to an over-protective, segregated service, rather than modern, integrated provision"
- (5) Council further recognises that changes of the nature recommended by the Care Quality Commission will not be easy to achieve quickly precisely because they challenge the traditional way of providing services which users and their families and carers are familiar with and feel safe with, and that this is reflected in the responses to the consultation which urged retention of all Day Centres.
- (6) Council therefore believes that the Interim Director of Social Services should be supported in his moves to implement the Action Plan introduced following the Care Quality Commission report and that, while progress should be carefully monitored and scrutinised, it would not be appropriate for this issue to become a political football which can only distract from the very real and difficult issues that lie ahead.

Right of reply: Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

2. MOTION: LIB DEM STUDENT BETRAYAL

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Chris Meaden (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council condemns the decision of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government to cut 80 per cent of teaching funding for universities and to ask the next generation to shoulder the bill through a tripling of tuition fees.

- (2) Council shares the anger of thousands of students at the actions of the Liberal Democrats whose Leader and several MPs, prior to the general election, signed a pledge to scrap university tuition fees for all students taking their first degree, and has now reneged on this promise by agreeing to treble these fees.
- (3) Council also condemns the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance which enabled many students from lower and middle income families to stay on at school or College after the age of 16 with a view to obtaining 'A'Levels or their equivalent and access higher education.
- (4) Council notes that these cuts will reduce social mobility and create a system in which only those young people from affluent families will be able to go to university.
- (5) Council therefore supports the campaign by students and others to stop these cuts and to develop a funding system which adequately resources universities, rejects any moves to make higher education elitist, and provides positive opportunities for young people to apply to study at university.
- (6) Council calls on all members of the Council to support this motion and thereby show solidarity with the youth of Wirral.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Peter Reisdorf (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

Delete all and replace with:

- (1) Council notes that our Universities must be fully funded if they are to continue to provide high quality education to students.
- (2) Council believes it was a mistake for the Labour government to introduce tuition fees in 1998 despite a Manifesto commitment not to and furthermore believes it was a mistake for the Labour Government to introduce £3,000 per year top up fees in 2004.
- (3) Council notes that in 2009, the then Labour Government commissioned the Browne Report, because their funding policy had failed to produce enough resources for universities.
- (4) Council believes that the Government's proposals improve on the system introduced by the Labour Government in a number of ways, including:
 - Increasing the repayment threshold from £15,000 to £21,000
 - Ending upfront fees for part-time students
 - More generous grants for lowest income students
 - Ensuring all students will repay less per month than they currently pay
 - Under the scheme, any student eligible for free school meals who is accepted for a place at university would have one year's fees paid by the state

(5) However, Council believes that instead of increasing top up fees, all tuition fees should be phased out so that students are not penalised with thousands of pounds worth of debt for entering into higher education.

(6) Council also believes that MPs should vote against any increase in tuition fees.

Right of reply: Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

3. MOTION: INCREDIBLE EDIBLE WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Peter Reisdorf (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Gill Gardiner (3 minutes)

(1) Council applauds the success of the “Incredible Edible Todmorden” project and the work that they have done with Calderdale Council and other public bodies to make available land in their area in order to increase the amount of local produce grown and eaten in the town, improve sustainability and self sufficiency and promote healthy eating.

(2) Council, therefore, requests the appropriate officers:

(a) Make contact with the “Incredible Edible Todmorden” Group to learn more and assess whether such a project is feasible for Wirral communities.

(b) Review local funding sources, such as that available to local area forums, to assess whether any financial support could be available for local groups to progress such a community project if sufficient interest exists.

(c) Identify and engage with community leaders with experience of growing food and gardening who may wish to support such a project.

(d) Support any interested groups wishing to develop an “Incredible Edible Wirral” project to engage with residents, area forums, schools, social landlords, employers and other groups and organisations as may be appropriate, to identify sites that may be suitable for growing local food through community action.

Right of reply: Councillor Peter Reisdorf (7 minutes)

4. MOTION: WIRRAL’S FUTURE

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Simon Holbrook (3 minutes)

(1) Council notes that the ‘Wirral’s Future – Be a part of It’ consultation generated more responses than any previous Council consultation – 2,972 on paper and 2,687 online, including 276 employers.

(2) Council thanks:

- (a) All residents who participated and gave their views.
- (b) The community groups and employers who hosted and welcomed visits from staff, as part of the 123 events and activities held across Wirral.
- (c) The independent members of the four task forces, from a wide variety of organisations, who gave their time, freely and willingly.
- (d) The members of the Consultation Project Team.
- (e) The staff who engaged with the public at roadshows, events and meetings and who collated the responses from the public.

(3) Council requests that:

- (a) the results of the consultation form the basis of a refreshed Corporate Plan, informed by the people's priorities as expressed during the consultation.
- (b) an annual consultation is carried out, to review all services and to enable residents, employers, Council employees, voluntary, faith and community groups to influence future Council policy and that the process for 2011/12 should start in January.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones (7 minutes)

Delete existing text and replace with the following:

Council believes that the 'Wirral's Future – Be a part of it' consultation was fundamentally flawed for the following reasons:

1. It failed to go through the Council's democratic procedures. Key decisions were taken by the Leader of the Council and announcements were made via press releases;
2. The Administration chose to ignore completely the Council's overview and scrutiny committees which were designed to undertake this type of work;
3. Members of the Task Forces were selected by the leadership, with no opportunity by opposition members to influence who sat on these bodies or the recommendations they put forward;
4. The questionnaire used in the exercise was of poor quality – it was too long and complicated; it used leading questions on issues such as the out-sourcing of

Council services; and many of the questions contained confusing and ambiguous wording;

5. The response to the questionnaire represents only 1.8% of Wirral's population;
6. No evidence has been produced which demonstrates that all on-line versions of the questionnaire were completed by Wirral residents and that multiple copies of the questionnaire were not completed by one individual;

As a result of the above, Council agrees that it would be extremely unwise to base decisions about the budget and a new Corporate Plan on the outcome of this flawed consultation.

Council asks the Interim Chief Executive to report to a future Cabinet meeting on how a more rigorous, robust and representative consultation process can be carried out in the future.

Right of reply: Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

5. MOTION: COMMERCIAL COCKLING

Proposed by Councillor Pat Glasman (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones (3 minutes)

- (1) Council recognises that the people of Wirral take a keen interest in the preservation of their coastal environment. Council therefore condemns the way in which a commercial cockling operation was sprung on the people of Wirral without any prior consultation. Council notes that discussions started as early as June this year, that a Conservative Councillor is the Vice Chair of the North West and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee and that Conservative Councillors were fully aware of the preparations taking place from November 5th.
- (2) Council believes this is yet another shabby example where the Conservative/Liberal Democrat administration have failed to live up to their own much stated commitment to consultation and therefore apologises to the people of Wirral for their failure to consult on an environmentally sensitive commercial enterprise as significant as this.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor David Elderton (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis (3 minutes)

- (1) *delete all after 'any prior consultation' and replace with,* Council notes that Wirral's nominated members were given insufficient notice of the decision to open the beds at Leasowe for commercial activity and notes the apology to Councillor Denis Knowles from the Sea Fisheries Committee.

- (2) Council notes that, while the local authority has no jurisdiction or legal powers to prevent such a decision in future, believes that decisions affecting local communities should be made with greater involvement, engagement and consultation with local people and communities.
- (3) Council therefore welcomes the abolition of the Sea Fisheries Committee and the establishment of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority, with effect from April 2011, and is pleased to note the greater role for local people, including a nominated Member.
- (4) Council thanks the Council staff and contractors; the members of the Friends of the North Wirral Coastal Park and those local cocklers who collected litter for their work to rectify the damage caused by inconsiderate commercial cocklers at Leasowe.
- (5) Council welcomes the action to improve communication between the various parties involved and instructs the Interim Chief Executive to write to the Shadow Chairman and Chief Executive of the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority to visit the coast at Leasowe and to meet with members, officers and community representatives.

Right of reply: Councillor Pat Glasman (7 minutes)

6. MOTION: CRUISE LINER TERMINAL

Proposed by Councillor Ann Bridson (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly (3 minutes)

Council notes:

- (1) The success of the cruise liner day visits to the Liverpool Pier Head.
- (2) The restrictions, relating to EU competition rules arising from the use of public grant given to support the development of that same facility as a turnaround destination, currently preventing the Liverpool cruise liner terminal from handling ship turnarounds.
- (3) The existence of the facility to operate as turnaround port from Langton Dock, but the inadequacy and impracticality of that facility for cruise ships for docking and embarkation; and the absurdity of preventing the use of the Pier Head for ship turnarounds under competition given the close proximity of Langton Dock.
- (4) That each cruise ship turnaround generates an estimated £150,000 – money that would be spent across the city-region area.
- (5) The enthusiasm of cruise operators, such as Bibby Line and Fred Olsen, for the turnaround restrictions to be lifted.

Council welcomes:

- (6) The Liverpool Daily Post 'Get on Board' campaign, calling for the licence to be granted for cruise turnarounds.
- (7) The support for the campaign for a turnaround licence from Wirral MPs, including Esther McVey and Angela Eagle.

Therefore, Council,

Requests the Interim Chief Executive, in consultation with city-region colleagues to write to the Transport Minister, Theresa Villiers, urging the restrictions to be challenged leading to the granting of a license for the Liverpool Cruise Liner terminal to operate as a turnaround port.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Les Rowlands (3 minutes)

In paragraph (7) delete all after 'Wirral MPs' and add 'and MEPs'

In last paragraph delete 'Theresa Villiers' and insert 'Mike Penning'

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Amend paragraph (7) to read:

- (7) The support for the campaign for a turnaround licence, from the four Wirral MPs, Esther McVey, Angela Eagle, Frank Field and Alison McGovern.

Right of reply: Councillor Ann Bridson (7 minutes)

7. MOTION: WHY BRITAIN VOTED FOR CHANGE

Proposed by Councillor Andrew Hodson (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis (3 minutes)

- (1) Council notes that, instead of ending 'Boom and Bust' Labour brought us to the brink of bankruptcy. They doubled the national debt and left Britain with the biggest budget deficit in the G20. We are spending £120 million every single day just to pay off the interest on Labour's debt. This is Labour's legacy.
- (2) Ed Miliband and Alan Johnson were at the heart of the Labour Government that created this mess and they have no credible plan to clean it up. They disagree over whether to have a graduate tax or not, whether to have a 50p tax or not and

whether unions should elect Labour's leader or not. We know what they are against but we don't know what they're for.

- (3) If we listened to Labour, our debt would be almost £100 billion higher by the end of the Parliament and we would be paying £4 billion more in debt interest alone by the time of the next election - money that goes to foreign creditors to help pay for their schools and hospitals rather than our own. Their approach would take us back to the brink of bankruptcy - that would mean less growth, less investment and fewer jobs.
- (4) Council further notes that, since losing control of the Council, the Labour Party has failed to offer solutions to the challenges arising from their Government's failure and, indeed, have failed to recognise that some of these challenges even exist.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Anne McArdle (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan (3 minutes)

Delete all existing text and replace with the following:

- (1) Council acknowledges that the global recession was caused by the failure of the sub-prime mortgage market in America and the actions of the banks and bankers who took unacceptable risks in the pursuit of short term financial gain. If it had not been for the actions of the Labour Government in bailing out Northern Rock and subsequently other banks, then the financial stability of this country would have been very close to collapse.
- (2) Council should recognise that Labour's real legacy is one of new schools, of new hospitals, of high employment, low interest rates, pensioners lifted out of the poverty they were in after 18 years of a Tory Government.
- (3) The Labour Government acknowledged that the deficit had to be tackled, but not in a way that would asset strip the public sector, causing the loss of thousands of jobs, and decimating services to the people of the Wirral.
- (4) Council further notes that the Labour Group has, since May, repeatedly asserted the urgent need to address the ever increasing budget shortfall and that the ConDem administration have been found wanting in their strategy to tackle the shortfall, preferring instead to govern by press release.
- (5) Council notes that the country's finances were clearly in better shape than the Coalition Government claimed as they have recently agreed to lend Ireland £7bn, to be repaid over 4 years, as part of a rescue package to bolster their ailing economy.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Peter Reisdorf (3 minutes)

Add:

(5) Finally, Council notes that the Liberal Democrats, as part of the Coalition Government, have taken a number of steps to increase fairness in our society, alongside the measures necessary to deal with Labour's legacy of debt, including:

- Raising the starting threshold for income tax,
- Increasing top rate capital gains tax;
- Linking pension increases to inflation, 2.5% or wages, whichever is the greatest
- A £2.5bn pupil premium targeted at children in greatest need
- A massive programme of constitutional reform including a referendum on fairer votes.

Right of reply: Councillor Andrew Hodson (7 minutes)

8. MOTION: WELFARE REFORMS

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Bob Moon (3 minutes)

(1) Council welcomes the Coalition Government's proposals for simplification and integration of the current complex system of benefits and tax credits and the replacement of a range of working-age welfare benefits with a "Universal Credit" from 2013 onwards.

(2) Council believes that this will remove the "benefits trap", supporting people in the transition from benefits to work by ensuring benefits are tapered and that it will:

- (a) Simplify and amalgamate the main welfare benefits into one single system;
- (b) Ensure that work always pays; and
- (c) Alleviate poverty by boosting take-up and encouraging job market participation.

(3) Council further believes that:

- (a) This policy is about supporting people, especially those on the lowest incomes.
- (b) The Universal Credit will streamline and simplify the system so that people will more easily know where they will stand if they take a job;
- (c) With a single benefit, take-up will improve, helping to reduce in-work poverty;

- (d) Combating high withdrawal rates of benefits as someone enters work or increases hours will increase people's ability to change their circumstances without ending up with less money at the end of the week;
 - (e) People will be able to keep more of their wage before the benefit taper kicks in;
 - (f) There will be no cash losers – where the new, simpler system would produce a lower entitlement than the present system, current recipients will be protected;
 - (g) That the use of sanctions will act as a deterrent and that the most severe sanctions are intended only to be applied in exceptional circumstances where people systematically and repeatedly abuse the system;
- (4) Therefore, Council calls on officers to work with partners to support residents in the transition to the proposed new system of working age benefits by ensuring that relevant information and advice on the new system and how they will be affected will be available through the call centre and one stop shop network.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Ron Abbey (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Whittingham (3 minutes)

Delete everything and replace with the following:

- (1) This Council welcomes the intention of any reform which would enable more people on benefits to access work easily. However, it believes that the Coalition Government's welfare reforms are destined to fail because they are not accompanied by measures which would create jobs. Instead the Government has already announced in the CSR that 490,000 public sector jobs will be lost and this is likely to result in an equivalent number of job losses in the private sector.
- (2) Council does not believe that there will be no cash losers, particularly as the current Housing Benefit will form part of the Universal Credit in future and the government has already introduced a cap on Housing Benefit which will severely disadvantage those living in high rent areas and cause severe hardship to many families.
- (3) Council further deplores the government plans for fixed term tenancies for social housing, with a potential minimum of just two years, which will be reviewed if the tenant's financial circumstances improve. Council notes that this will act as a direct disincentive to work, with individuals forced to choose between a job or a roof over their head, which is in direct opposition to the government's stated welfare reforms to encourage individuals into work.
- (4) Council is strongly opposed to the announced changes to Disability Living Allowance which will remove the mobility component for those living in residential care and limit their ability to have any kind of social or working life outside the residential setting. Council believes this is a retrograde step and, with further major cuts in the Disability Living Allowance budget projected for the future, sees this as a direct attack on those with disabilities which will worsen their living

conditions and remove much of the progress made over the last decades which enable them to play a full part in society today.

Right of reply: Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)