

Council – 14 February, 2011

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: THE FUTURE OF BURTON'S AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Proposed by Councillor Andrew Hodson (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Williams (3 minutes)

- (1) Council regrets the proposal by Burton's Foods to cease operations at the factory in Moreton, after more than 60 years production at the site.
- (2) Council welcomes the meetings held, at the Leader's request, with managers from Burton's Foods before Christmas when the Supply Chain Review was revealed, and the meetings held since with union representatives.
- (3) Council also welcomes the action by the Members of Parliament for Wallasey and Birkenhead to raise this issue in the House of Commons.
- (4) Council urges the company to reconsider this proposal and to take into account:
 - (a) The commitment, skills and flexibility of the employees, over many years, through periods of economic recession and recovery
 - (b) Investment by the taxpayer, not least by Wirral Borough Council, to secure jobs and improve the site's viability
 - (c) The current economic climate and the impact possible closure will have on families dependent on the company for their income
- (5) Council also restates its policy that the Burton's Foods site, along with the site used by Typhoo Tea and Manor Bakeries is for industrial and manufacturing purposes and not residential development.
- (6) Council instructs the interim Chief Executive and interim Director of Corporate Services to continue discussions with Burton's Foods for the duration of their consultation and to offer support to the company, as available, to maintain operations at the Moreton site.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Ann McArdle (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes (3 minutes)

At the end of paragraph 3 delete full stop and insert:

“including the action from the Wallasey MP Angela Eagle in securing an adjournment debate on the closure in the House of Commons and the support from Birkenhead MP Frank Field during that debate.”

At end of the motion insert new paragraphs:

- (7) Council recognises that this factory has only been saved in the past when the workforce and their representatives, the national Government, North West Regional Development Agency, the Council and the local MP have worked together to ensure that the future of manufacturing on the site can be safeguarded. Council pledges to continue with this approach.
- (8) Council further welcomes the launch by the Moreton workforce of a petition to save the factory and urges all Wirral residents to show their support by signing it.
- (9) Council also calls on the national Government in general and the Business Department in particular to ensure that it engages with the campaign to save biscuit manufacturing on the Moreton site and to that end ensure that, as a minimum, it makes available resources to match any which the Scottish Executive may make available to the company to facilitate its plans to move some of these jobs from Moreton to Scotland.

Right of reply: Councillor Andrew Hodson (7 minutes)

2. MOTION: CUTS IN COUNCIL SERVICES

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council condemns the massive cuts in services cavalierly proposed by the Conservative-LibDem led administration without any regard for its consequences.
- (2) Council believes that the loss of £48m from Wirral's budget in 2011/12 and over 1300 posts, which now includes a further 220 jobs as a result of decisions taken in December, will inflict lasting damage on services for local residents which will take years to repair.
- (3) Furthermore Council believes that the loss of 1300 jobs from one of Wirral's largest employers, while jobs are also being shed in the private sector, will have a damaging effect on the economy of Wirral as a whole.

- (4) Council contrasts the rightful concern expressed by the Leader of the Council over the consequences of 342 jobs being lost at Burton's in Moreton with his total disregard for the consequences of his own decision to slash over 1300 jobs from the Council and condemns the double standards this exposes.
- (5) Council cannot accept the ideological Tory, and now Tory/Lib Dem, view that public sector workers, who do not work for profit, are in some way second class citizens, who are unproductive, who do not have families, who do not suffer consequences, who do not contribute to the economy, and who can be dispensed with in a way that would create total uproar if they were a major private employer on Wirral.
- (6) Furthermore, Council does not accept the administration's ill founded view that none of these cuts will affect front-line services. The list of posts being deleted includes care workers, librarians, youth workers, staff from children's centres, teachers, and community patrol officers and many others. Any reasonable person would define these posts as 'front line' posts, making a major contribution to the well being of our communities.
- (7) Council also condemns the utter incompetence with which the administration has managed these cuts:
- They carried out a flawed consultation exercise which involved only 1.8% of the population of Wirral and, in spite of the time and expense used to undertake it, yielded only £691,000 out of the £48m of cuts.
 - This consultation had no impact on the largest and most damaging element of the cuts, i.e. the redundancies which accounted for some £24m, yet this administration continues to hide behind it claiming public approval for their actions.
 - They failed to take action early in the year and delayed inviting staff to apply for EVR and voluntary severance until October 2010, when it was too late to manage large scale redundancies in a sensible and measured way, minimising any potential consequences.
 - As a result of this failure, in a desperate attempt to achieve a huge savings target, staff have been allowed to leave the Council's employment without a proper assessment of the impact on services, without any agreed restructuring in place, and with no knowledge of the financial implications of any restructurings necessary to protect services.
 - To add insult to injury, as a cheap threat to drive staff into taking EVRs, this administration cut the value of any future redundancy package for staff who did not choose to leave now, or who were not allowed to leave, while awarding substantial pay rises to a small number of senior staff.
- (8) Council is further appalled and outraged at the grossly insensitive way in which some of the cuts are being driven through at break neck speed. The failure to consult properly with families and carers of elderly people who use the five care homes which are being closed is totally unacceptable and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services should apologise to the residents and their families.

- (9) Council believes that the Cabinet's decision to extend contracts with the voluntary, community and faith organisations which are due to end in March 2011 by three months pending a 'review' is a cynical political move to avoid making cuts in the funding for these organisations until after the May local elections.
- (10) Council condemns the total failure of the Leader of the Council to criticise the Government for decimating local government funding in general and Wirral Council's budget in particular. Council cannot believe he has remained silent in the face of over £50million in cuts for this year alone. Council also notes that, by cravenly supporting and actively participating in these draconian cuts, the Deputy Leader of the Council has once again surrendered any claim by the Liberal Democrats to be a progressive party.
- (11) Finally, Council condemns the decision of the administration to suspend the Council's constitution at the Council meeting on the 13th December in order to avoid having to refer cuts which did not have all party agreement to the relevant scrutiny committees for further consideration. This attempt to silence opposition to the cuts, or prevent any moves to reduce their impact, will not succeed and Council recognises the right of the Labour opposition to represent the views of growing numbers of Wirral residents who wish to see an end to the policies of the Tory-LibDem coalition both nationally and locally.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist (3 minutes)

Delete all after 'This Council' and replace with:

- (1) recognises that the previous Labour Government led by Gordon Brown left the country with the worst national debt since the Second World War and that in their last year of office, Labour borrowed a quarter of everything they spent, a staggering £160 billion.
- (2) Council notes that arising from Labour's legacy of debt and failure, the Coalition has made deficit reduction a priority to restore the finances of the Nation, and that this in turn has resulted in a difficult financial settlement for local government.
- (3) Council notes that the projected deficit in Wirral's finances has risen from around £70 million over three years when Labour were in Government, to around £115 million over four years under the Coalition, but is greatly concerned at the front loading of these budget reductions and recognises that this has created severe and unnecessary difficulties for all local authorities in planning the required changes to their services. Council supports the work of the LGA in seeking further resources to support the vital services provided by local government.
- (4) Council commends the approach to this challenge taken by the Council's Cabinet:

- by engaging with the public to establish the people's priorities, through the 'Wirral's Future – be a part of it' consultation;
 - through the rescue and re-invigoration of the Change Programme; and
 - the timely action to offer generous early retirement and voluntary severance packages.
- (5) Council notes that these strands came together in the Cabinet resolution of 9th December, which was supported by Council on 13th December to deliver £48m of budget savings, whilst protecting front line services and without compulsory redundancies.
- (6) Council contrasts this with the approach advocated by the Labour Party, which has at the same time accused the Cabinet of both being too slow and too hasty in implementing change.
- (7) Council condemns the dismissive approach of the Labour Group to consultation, and their arrogant 'Decide – Announce – Defend' approach to decision making.

Right of reply: Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

3. MOTION: DEMOCRATIC REFORM AND LOCALISM

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Gill Gardiner (3 minutes)

- (1) Council welcomes the measures in the Localism and Decentralisation Bill, published 13th December 2010 that will:
- Involve people more closely in the workings of their communities
 - Diversify the way services are provided
 - Reduce the interference of central government in local and community matters
- (2) Council particularly welcomes the amendment of Pt 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, giving the flexibility for local authorities to propose their own preferred governance structures.
- (3) Council notes that the partnership agreement between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups commits the current administration to consideration of how a committee system might be re-introduced and to enhancing the role of all elected members of the Council and seeking mechanisms that will allow the delegation of significant amounts of executive authority to members.
- (4) Council also notes the commitment of the current Conservative and Liberal Democrat administration to embedding processes which engage the public in the Council's decision making.

- (5) Council further notes the establishment and work of the Council's Localism Commission under the leadership of Councillor Kelly, preparing the way for a substantial devolution of functions and budgets to local neighbourhoods.
- (6) Council believes that steps should be taken now to prepare for a move towards a modernised committee structure, creating a more democratic council with the opportunity for all Councillors to be involved in making real decisions on matters that affect their residents, and being held accountable for them.
- (7) Therefore, in anticipation of the Localism Bill being given Royal Assent, Council instructs the Director of Law HR and Asset Management to immediately begin holding and facilitating discussions between the three party leaders to develop a new governance model for Wirral, within existing resources, to be ready to come into operation at the earliest opportunity within the 2011/12 municipal year once the relevant legislation is in place.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

Delete all after 'Council welcomes' and insert:

- (1) the choice being given to local councils to establish a form of governance which best suits them.
- (2) However, Council is aware that this is a matter which fundamentally affects the democracy and effective running of the organisation and which therefore deserves serious consideration before any decisions are taken.
- (3) Council has noted with dismay that in the past year the Cabinet and Scrutiny system has been seriously weakened by the blatant disregard of the leadership for the strategic role of Cabinet, taking decisions without prior referral or reports to Cabinet, and by the repeated avoidance of any real opportunity for Scrutiny, particularly on budget issues where the opportunity for Scrutiny is required by the Constitution.
- (4) Council is concerned that any hasty changes to the current form of governance could in fact lead to a form of elective dictatorship where the real decisions are taken by the leadership and a small cabal of members without any wider strategic debate and without any opportunity for scrutiny of those decisions.
- (5) Council recognises that there are flaws in the current system which need addressing, including the ability for all councillors to participate more fully in decision making, but that there are also new statutory requirements for Scrutiny of some outside bodies which need to be met.
- (6) Council therefore recommends that the whole matter be investigated thoroughly, with the opportunity for all members to participate in a debate which

fundamentally affects their role as councillors, and that no changes are made to the governance system until after Annual Council in May 2012.

- (7) Council also recommends that any changes are subject to a pilot period followed by a review of that pilot.

Right of reply: Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

4. MOTION: WORKING WITH WIRRAL'S VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH ORGANISATIONS

Proposed by Councillor Peter Kearney (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Jeff Green (3 minutes)

- (1) Council believes that Wirral's voluntary, community and faith-based organisations are invaluable partners in the delivery of services, support for the most vulnerable and engaging with communities.
- (2) Council believes that the innovation and enthusiasm of civil society is essential in tackling the social, economic and political challenges that Wirral faces.
- (3) Council will take action to support and encourage social responsibility, volunteering and philanthropy, and make it easier for people to come together to improve their communities and help one another.
- (4) Council welcomes 'Big Society' projects such as the Oxton Gateway project by Wirral Christian Centre and the new community centre being constructed at King's Church in Bebington.
- (5) Council notes the creation of a Big Society Unit within the Authority to build relations with Wirral's many community, voluntary and faith organisations and, specifically:
 - (a) Bring together and coordinate the available support for voluntary, community and faith groups to make their access to this support easy and quick
 - (b) To improve the promotion of such support to ensure that current and new groups are informed about the available support
 - (c) Review and create innovative new ways to engage volunteers, community groups and faith based organisations in the service delivery of this Council.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Jean Stapleton (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Denise Roberts (3 minutes)

Delete all after paragraph 1 and insert:

- (2) Council believes that the development of the much trumpeted "Big Society" is being seriously undermined by the dramatic cuts in local authority funding across

the country and the impact this is having on Voluntary Groups who are dependent on local authority funding for a high proportion of their activities.

- (3) Council notes the comments of Dame Elizabeth Hoodless, the outgoing head of Community Service Volunteers, who said that “massive cuts” were leading to a slump in volunteering opportunities.
- (4) Council notes that the Government’s Big Society Tsar, Lord Wei, has promoted the idea of Council staff working fewer hours and volunteering instead, at a time when huge additional pressures are being placed on Council staff as a result of massive cuts in staffing.
- (5) Council further notes that Lord Wei has just announced that he is to work fewer hours as the Big Society Tsar because, without a private income, he cannot afford to give high levels of time to unpaid work, ironically summing up one of the main contradictions in the idea of the Big Society, which appears, without proper funding, to depend on the good will of unpaid volunteers.
- (6) Council recognises that Liverpool has now withdrawn from its position as one of the four authorities running a Big Society pilot, because the impact of local government cuts on the voluntary sector is making it impossible to deliver.
- (7) Council also notes that the leadership on Wirral is resorting to re-badging ongoing projects, like the community centre at Christchurch, Bebington, in order to bolster the concept of the Big Society.
- (8) Council believes that the extension until June of Voluntary Sector contracts on Wirral, pending a review of the commissioning of services from the Voluntary Sector, with no further guarantees, is a cynical manoeuvre to postpone the impact of cuts until after the May elections.
- (9) Council therefore believes that setting up a Big Society Unit to increase access and support for voluntary, community and faith groups, at a time when the funds available are dramatically diminishing, is a cynical exercise, promoting the Big Society to disguise the impact on services of cuts in local government funding, at the very point when the voluntary sector is most exposed and at risk.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly (3 minutes)

Add to the end of paragraph (5):

- (d) Work being overseen by the Interim Director of Corporate Services to support the development, capacity and business planning skills of social and community enterprises.

Right of reply: Councillor Peter Kearney (7 minutes)

5. MOTION: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Proposed by Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Walter Smith (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council registers its extreme concern about the increase in youth unemployment announced recently. The Office of National Statistics revealed that one in five 16 to 24-year olds are now out of work, after a rise of 32,000 saw the figure reach 951,000 – the highest level since records began.
- (2) Council notes that areas like Wirral, with high levels of urban deprivation, already have higher than average unemployment figures and higher numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.
- (3) Council believes that the abolition of the Educational Maintenance Allowance and the tripling of tuition fees for studying at university will make it more difficult for young people to obtain the qualifications they require to obtain jobs.
- (4) Council further believes that the abolition of national programmes aimed at helping young unemployed people, such as the Future Jobs Fund, is also a retrograde step
- (5) Council calls on the Tory-LibDem Government to reverse these disastrous policies and provide proper support for our young people.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Andrew Hodson (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Tom Anderson (3 minutes)

Delete all after ' (1) This Council' and replace with:

notes that the latest figures for the number of 18-24 year olds in Wirral claiming Jobseekers Allowance has fallen from 3,090 in February 2010 to 2,585. This includes, for example, a reduction in Bebington Ward from 110 young people in February 2010 to 80 today.

- (2) While Council welcomes this reduction, it states its concern that, in spite of massive spending by the previous Government, many communities in Wirral are still blighted by large numbers of people not in work, education or training.
- (3) Council notes that 250,000 young people are growing up in homes where no-one has ever worked and that 600,000 people aged under 24 have never worked since leaving school.
- (4) Council further notes that 22,000 people in Wirral have no qualifications and that too many young people are leaving school without the skills employers need.
- (5) Council welcomes the decision by Cabinet that have created 300 places on the Wirral Apprentice Scheme.

Council therefore instructs the interim Director of Corporate Resources and the Interim Director of Children's Services to ensure:

1. Maximum enrolment to the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme and welcomes the doubling of the number of places available to Wirral's young people by the Cabinet
2. Students are encouraged to take part in the Government's new Work Experience Programme which will allow them to undertake work experience for up to eight weeks so they can get a "meaningful" stint in a business environment and improving their CV.
3. That schools in Wirral identify those students who would benefit most from the new targeted support to stay in further education
4. People are made aware of the new support available to help start their own business, including the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme and Enterprise Clubs
5. Full participation in the new Work Programme, replacing the failed New Deal and other programmes

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

Delete paragraphs (3) to (5) and insert:

- (3) Council expresses its wish that the replacement for EMA should be an adequately funded enhanced learner support fund, managed locally and targeted to support more closely those young people facing the most significant financial barriers to participation.
- (4) Council believes that, following the cessation of national programmes such as the future jobs fund, the government urgently needs to develop effective new proposals to tackle youth unemployment.
- (5) Council welcomes the £1.4BN funding for National Apprenticeships, which has been promised by the coalition Government for 2011/12, increasing the National Apprenticeship Service budget by £222M.

Insert new paragraphs as follows:

- (6) Council further welcomes the additional 146 'Wirral Apprentice' places agreed by Cabinet on 3 February 2011, bringing the total number of places being provided by the council to 325.
- (7) Finally, Council commends the Cabinet for listening to the results of the 'Wirral's Future – be a part of it' consultation and recommending funding to regeneration budgets of £2.1M, agreed by Council on 13 December 2010, to support job creation and local growth.

Right of reply: Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

6. MOTION: SECURING AN EFFECTIVE REPLACEMENT FOR THE EMA

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Tom Harney (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council recognises that the Young People's Learning Agency has been able to provide many of Wirral's young people with financial support to enable them to study at schools, the Birkenhead Sixth Form College and the Wirral Metropolitan College and other bodies.
- (2) Council understands that the Government has set out to replace this financial support with an enhanced learner support fund, managed locally and targeted to support more closely those young people facing the most significant financial barriers to participation.
- (3) Council recognises that consideration of the most effective way of supporting young people was reviewed in 2007, when the move from seeing EMA as an 'incentive' to replacing it with offering financial assistance to youngsters from poorer backgrounds was first identified.
- (4) Council appreciates that local schools, colleges and training institutions may be in a better position than a national agency to determine the needs of individual students but that the replacement scheme needs to be adequately resourced and effectively set up.
- (5) Council also welcomes that fact the Government is to fund an increase in educational places for 16 to 19 year olds and is raising the compulsory participation age to 18 by the end of the Parliament, meaning thousands more young people receive free education.
- (6) Council believes that the debate in Parliament on 19th January 2011 showed a growing recognition of the need to ensure that any replacement for the EMA needs to be more extensive than originally envisaged.
- (7) Council believes that:
 - (a) There is a need to ensure that students who currently receive support should be able to receive it until their current course ends.
 - (b) A realistic assessment should be made of the resources required for the support fund, by gathering information from the schools, colleges and providers involved.
 - (c) A locally managed scheme needs sufficient resources to manage it sensitively and effectively.
 - (d) The Government should be lobbied to maximise the amount available to support students from low income families.

- (e) Council further thanks the local MPs for their work to date, would welcome their continuing support and assistance and requests that they be informed of the views of this Council.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Walter Smith (3 minutes)

Delete paragraphs (2) to (6) and insert:

- (2) Council recognises that the sum allocated by the Government for a replacement for the Educational Maintenance Allowance is a derisory amount, currently set at just £26m, compared to the £560m previously invested by Labour in helping young people from poorer homes continue their studies.
- (3) Council notes that even if the Government is persuaded to triple that amount in order to buy off their Liberal Democrat colleagues, the amount is still derisory, and research by the University and College Union suggested that 70% of students in the poorest areas would drop out of college if their EMA was stopped.
- (4) Council is not remotely surprised that the Liberal Democrats are showing extreme unease about the consequences of cancelling Educational Maintenance Grants and trying to make the best of a policy which brings shame to their members.
- (5) Council therefore demands that the Government rethink this decision and restore the Educational Maintenance Grants forthwith.

Right of reply: Councillor Phil Gilchrist (7 minutes)

7. MOTION: SUPPORTING WIRRAL'S POST OFFICE NETWORK

Proposed by Councillor Cherry Povall (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Paul Hayes (3 minutes)

- (1) Council notes that four out of every ten Post Offices that existed in 1997 had closed by 2010.
- (2) Council believes the remaining Post Office network in Wirral offers a valuable lifeline to many people, not least those who do not, or cannot, have a bank account and those who do not have access to online banking.
- (3) Council therefore welcomes:
 - (a) The commitment by the Coalition Government to ensure that Post Offices remain in the public sector and are allowed to offer a wide range of services in order to sustain the network.

- (b) The decision to give Post Office Card account holders the chance to benefit from direct debit discounts and ensure that social tariffs offer access to the best prices available.
- (c) Discussions between the Council and the Post Office to enable Local Housing Allowance claimants to use Post Office 'Payout'.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones (3 minutes)

Delete all after paragraph (2) and insert:

- (3) Council expresses its concern, however, that the Government rejected calls for a PostBank to support access to fair banking.
- (4) Council notes that the Liberal Democrats' 2010 Manifesto pledged to: "Improve access to banking for all with a PostBank, revenues from which will also help to secure the future of the Post Office" and "End the post office closure programme to keep post offices open in rural areas where they're the lynchpin of community life, improve access to banking and help secure the future of the Post Office through a PostBank."
- (5) Council also notes that the Liberal Democrat Minister for Postal Affairs, Ed Davey, broke his party's manifesto pledge when he rejected the proposal for a PostBank in his statement on the future of the Post Offices on November 9th.
- (6) Council accepts that establishing a PostBank at the Post Office would help improve access to banking and secure the future of the Post Office network and recognises that the campaign for a PostBank is supported by the Federation of Small Businesses, the National Federation of Subpostmasters, the Countryside Alliance, the National Pensioners Convention, and the New Economics Foundation.
- (7) Council believes that the Coalition Government's plans to privatise Royal Mail and break the historic link with the Post Office puts the future of the Post Office network in jeopardy, particularly in view of the fact that no other country in the world has separated its Post Office network from its mail business.
- (8) Council does not accept that the Postal Services Bill will prevent further Post Office closures. Ministers say there will be 'no closure programme' but meanwhile over 150 post offices have closed recently and 900 are currently up for sale.
- (9) Council further expresses concern that Ministers have rejected calls for the Bill to:
 - (a) Guarantee the size of the Post Office network
 - (b) Guarantee the Inter-Business Agreement between Royal Mail and the Post Office

- (c) Guarantee access criteria to ensure every community is near to a post office

Right of reply: Councillor Cherry Povall (7 minutes)

8. MOTION: INCREASE IN VAT

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan (3 minutes)

This Council is totally opposed to the increase in VAT to 20% from January 2011 as it will hit the poorest members of society the hardest.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Les Rowlands (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis (3 minutes)

Delete all after 'This Council is' and replace with:

, like every other council, suffering the effects of Labour's debt crisis. This left Britain with the worst debt of any major advanced economy.

Council believes that Labour maxed out the credit card with government debt. As we all know, when you run up massive credit card bills, the longer you leave it the worse it gets.

Council believes that if we don't take steps now to live within our means we'll end up paying higher taxes or making deeper spending cuts just to pay-off our debt.

Council is concerned that if we don't get our debt under control, we will burden our children and grandchildren with the bills for Labour's mistakes.

Council notes that the most vulnerable people in Wirral and those on lowest incomes are often more reliant on loans and credit cards for day-to-day living and believes that any rise in interest rates caused by not tackling the national deficit will hit them hardest.

Council notes that those on lower incomes spend a higher proportion of their income on fuel, food and children's clothes, all of which will not be affected by the increase in VAT, as pointed out by Labour when they increased VAT from 15% to 17.5% in January 2009

Council also rejects the policy of the previous Labour Government which saw the abolition of 10p rate of tax on the lowest paid.

Council welcomes the additional support by the Coalition Government now being provided to the lowest paid in Wirral, including:

- Lifting almost 1 million of the lowest paid out of income tax altogether with a target to raise the threshold to £10,000, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats
- Exempting the lowest paid workers from the national public sector pay freeze
- Linking increases in the basic state pension to increases in wages, prices or 2.5%, whichever is higher
- Increasing the amount spent on the child element of the child tax credit by £2 billion, helping the lowest paid by £150 above inflation
- The increase in the Minimum Wage and the decision by the Coalition Government to extend the Minimum Wage to apprentices

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

Delete all after 'This Council' and replace with:

condemns the hypocrisy of the Labour Party, who had plans to raise VAT to 19% had they won the General Election.

Council notes that over the course of this Parliament, the point at which people start having to pay income tax and National Insurance will rise by nearly £4,000 to £10,000 a year, starting with a £1000 increase this year.

Council notes that this rise in the amount people can earn before paying tax will take many Wirral residents out of tax altogether and that it will be of particular benefit to people on low incomes.

Council further notes that the Coalition was able to make this tax cut despite the appalling financial mess it inherited from the last Labour Government, which left Britain with the worst National Debt since the Second World War.

Right of reply: Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

9. MOTION: MERSEYSIDE PENSION FUND: SHAREHOLDER VOTES ON EXECUTIVE PAY

Proposed by Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Bob Moon (3 minutes)

- (1) Council notes the research produced by Income Data Services, showing that pay for directors of the top 100 FTSE companies has risen by 55% in one year (between June 2009 and June 2010) at a time when ordinary workers face severe restraints on pay.
- (2) Council also notes the review, currently being undertaken by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, into corporate governance and economic short-termism, including directors' remuneration; A Long-Term Focus for

Corporate Britain, which is likely to recommend stronger links between company performance and executive pay.

- (3) Council welcomes the comments by TUC Secretary Brendan Barber, encouraging pension funds to exercise their rights as shareholders at company AGMs to vote against excessive chief executive, board level and banker pay and bonuses.
- (4) Council believes that the Merseyside Pension Fund should adopt and actively pursue a policy of restraint and social responsibility in relation to the pay and bonuses of senior executives of the companies that it invests in.
- (5) Council therefore instructs the Director of Finance, working with the Pensions Committee, to seek the agreement of the other Merseyside Councils to implementing this policy at the earliest opportunity, to further strengthen the Statement of Investment Principles as appropriate and to report annually on the actions taken in relation to this policy.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Ann McLachlan (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor George Davies (3 minutes)

Delete all and replace with:

- (1) Council notes that Merseyside Pension Fund through its affiliation to the Local Authority Pension Fund Forum actively promotes shareholder activism and the collective investment interests of the majority of local authority pension funds throughout the UK.
- (2) Council notes that Merseyside Pension Fund has recently set up a Risk and Governance Working party to take forward its work in this area.
- (3) Council notes that a principal priority for the Merseyside Pension Fund is to ensure it meets its fiduciary responsibility to past, present and future pensioners and the tax payers of Merseyside.
- (4) Council notes the singular failure of the present Conservative/Liberal coalition Government to take action to bring forward legislation to curb the bonus culture in the City and, in particular, to set an example of best practice corporate social responsibility by refusing to allow RBS, which is a publicly owned bank, to make obscene and inappropriate payments to its staff.
- (5) Council believes that, in the light of this failure, and in the light of the actions already being taken by the Merseyside Pension Fund, the Liberal Democrat Notice of Motion, while non contentious in itself, can only be seen as political window dressing which aims to divert attention from the Government's craven refusal to tackle the real issues.

Right of reply: Councillor Simon Holbrook (7 minutes)

10. MOTION: HIGH VOLTAGE DIRECT CURRENT

Proposed by Councillor Don McCubbin (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Wendy Clements (3 minutes)

- (1) Council notes the announcement by National Grid plc for a possible high voltage power cable through Wirral to connect electricity supply from Scotland to England.
- (2) Council welcomes the generation of power using wind, solar and tidal energy in order to further reduce our dependency on fossil fuels and meet our international obligations for carbon reduction.
- (3) Council also supports the need for protection of our local environment and urges National Grid to engage fully with communities and Wirral Borough Council in order to avoid or minimise disturbance to our local environment, not least the Site of Special Scientific Interest at the North Wirral Coast and sites of Special Biological Interest in any proposed route for the cable.
- (4) Should a high voltage cable be installed in Wirral, Council also requests National Grid use local contractors wherever possible during construction and to consider further opportunities with other organisations.

Right of reply: Councillor Don McCubbin (7 minutes)

11. MOTION: BIN COLLECTION SHAMBLES

Proposed by Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Adrian Jones (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council notes that the New Year heralded yet more chaos in bin collections on Wirral as the December shambles continued. Council believes that this level of poor performance in refuse collection is unacceptable and points out that the Cabinet member responsible for maintaining a good refuse collection service, Councillor Lesley Rennie, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor Jeff Green, who has been so anxious to reassure the public that all is well, are the same two councillors who were fired from the Cabinet by Councillor Steve Foulkes four years ago when they presided over another shambles in Wirral's bin collections.
- (2) Council recognises that Wirral residents pay their Council Tax in order to receive good services and that proper collection of rubbish is an essential and very visible part of those services.
- (3) Council notes that the winter weather is not yet over and seeks immediate reassurances that another snow fall will not see a repeat of the appalling performance earlier this year with bins left uncollected for weeks on end.

- (4) Council believes that, although the option of charging for garden waste collection was finally rejected by the Conservative Liberal Democrat Cabinet, it will only be a matter of time before the catastrophic cuts foisted by their government on local authorities will add this charge to many other new and increased charges, increasing the financial burden on hard pressed Wirral residents.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Lesley Rennie (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Jeff Green (3 minutes)

Delete Paragraph (1) and renumber paragraph (2) as (1) and delete paragraphs (3) and (4) then add:

- (2) Council notes that, following advice from the Met Office, Wirral undertook a programme of gritting of major roads and pedestrian areas
- (3) Council thanks residents for their patience during the severe weather conditions and reiterates that maintaining safety for residents and council staff and contractors is a priority.
- (4) Council notes:
- (a) Biffa crews often worked in appalling conditions and worked through Bank Holidays and until 2030hrs some days
 - (b) Community Payback, Council staff and Biffa crews worked together to grit roads and pavements in some locations
- (5) Council welcomes the additional arrangements introduced during this period, including temporary collection points across the Borough which enabled the backlog on collection routes to be tackled quicker.
- (6) Council requests the Cabinet Member consider, as part of the review of the service during the severe weather, the following:
- (a) Additional means of communicating with residents during further severe weather
 - (b) Opportunities for more effective use of Bidston waste collection centre, in discussion with Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority
 - (c) Additional equipment for Biffa crews and wagons to enable greater resilience during severe weather
 - (d) That these measures, and advice for residents, be included in the Guide to Services in Severe Weather, being produced by the Council

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Alan Brighthouse (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann Bridson (3 minutes)

Paragraph (1): Delete all after 'poor performance in refuse collection is unacceptable'

Paragraph (3): Insert after "immediate reassurances" the text "from the contractor"

Paragraph (4), line 1: Delete the words "believes that although" and replace with "notes".

Paragraph (4), line 2: Delete "finally" and delete all after "Liberal Democrat Cabinet".

Insert new Paragraph (5):

- (5) Council welcomes the Cabinet's response to seek to further improve winter resilience reported in minute 286 (13th January) and requests the further thorough investigation of this by the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Right of reply: Councillor Harry Smith (7 minutes)

12. MOTION: PUPIL PREMIUM

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

- (1) This council notes the importance of protecting education opportunities for Wirral's young people and welcomes the Coalition Government's decision to increase the amount of money allocated to schools.
- (2) Council also welcomes the introduction of the pupil premium, providing £430 extra funding for 2011/12 per pupil on Free School Meals, looked after children and the children of service-men and women.
- (3) Council notes the estimated £5m benefit this pupil premium will bring to over 11,000 of Wirral's most deprived and vulnerable pupils, (based on October 2010 School Census data).
- (4) Council believes this extra investment will help to ensure every pupil in Wirral has a fair start in life.
- (5) Council also welcomes the Coalition Government's commitment to increase the pupil premium fourfold by 2014/15, bringing the total premium to the £2.5bn called for by the Liberal Democrats in their manifesto.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Chris Meaden (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Ann McArdle (3 minutes)

Delete all after "This Council notes the importance of protecting education opportunities for Wirral's young people". Insert:

(1) Council recognises the attempt being made by the Liberal Democrats to put a gloss on the sad remnants of a policy in their manifesto which set out to improve the lot of children from poorer homes and ended up in a Coalition smoke and mirrors exercise of no real benefit to anyone.

(2) Council notes:

- (a) The amount of the pupil premium is much lower than originally anticipated, at just £430 per pupil, which is not sufficient to achieve the kind of educational gains that were hoped for.
- (b) The total national figure of £625m is not new money but will be found from within the existing schools budget.
- (c) This is simply a re-arrangement of schools funding, robbing Peter to pay Paul.
- (d) It is estimated that up to two thirds of schools will actually lose money with the only guarantee on Minimum Funding being that schools will not lose more than 1.5% of their cash allocation.
- (e) The pupil premium is not ring fenced for specific activities, and may therefore simply be used to make up the shortfall elsewhere.
- (f) In an area like Wirral with falling school rolls there will already be substantial pressure in the system as their funding is decreased to match the lower number of pupils in the schools.

(3) Council believes that the attempt to sell this pupil premium as a fulfilment of an initial manifesto commitment is indicative of the cynical relationship between the two Coalition partners and the desperation of the Liberal Democrat party to persuade their voters that the Coalition, which is proving a wholesale disaster for them, has yielded some returns for their betrayal of the electorate.

Right of reply: Councillor Stuart Kelly (7 minutes)