

Council – 17 October 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: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE REPORT

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council recognises the seriousness of the criticisms contained within the Supplementary Report on Corporate Governance.
- (2) Council further recognises that these criticisms relate to a culture which is insular and inward looking and which has failed to realise the level of its failings, either through denial of the truth, or through a lack of understanding of best practice elsewhere in Corporate Governance and Wirral's shortcomings in relation to that best practice.
- (3) Council believes that this culture has grown up over a long period of time, covering many different political administrations, and the responsibility for a failure to change it lies jointly with all of us – with politicians of all parties, with Senior Officers and with our own staff.
- (4) Council also believes that the ability to change this culture transcends political differences and that it is essential that everyone works together to revitalise the Council's Corporate Governance Arrangements to ensure that Wirral has the opportunity to become the excellent council we know it can be.
- (5) Council also believes that it is the hardwork and good will of many of its staff that has allowed good services to be delivered in many cases for the people of Wirral even where the structures and processes have been less than adequate, and believes that this hardwork and goodwill will carry us forward to a much better position when the appropriate rigorous measures have been carried out and a sturdy framework created to underpin any future service delivery.
- (6) Council therefore welcomes this Corporate Governance Report as a necessary Wake Up call to us all, and agrees to implement its recommendations in full.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies (3 minutes)

After final paragraph add:

In order to facilitate a new political culture which allows for consensus on key issues and joint working as appropriate for the common good of Wirral, Council recommends to the Leader of the Council that the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Leaders should be co-opted contributors to the Cabinet Committee on Corporate Governance with the right to speak but not vote.

Council further asks, in line with the Notice of Motion previously passed by all parties, and in line with pending legislation, that an all party working party comprising two members of each party be set up to seek to achieve consensus on the most appropriate form of democracy within the Council, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses both of the old Committee system and the current Cabinet system, and of any legislation and subsequent regulations as these become known.

Council asks that any new system meeting all party approval be prepared ready for adoption at the Council's AGM, in May 2012 or as soon thereafter that the enactment of the Localism Bill and any subsequent regulations allow.

Council recognises that this is a separate issue from the need to strengthen Corporate Governance in the Council, but believes that a successful outcome would, none the less, contribute to a less antagonistic and more co-operative form of politics, building on the individual strengths of each member.

Council further agrees, again in the light of a move towards more consensus, to increase the size of the Employment and Appointments Committee by one to nine places (4:4:1) and decrease the size of the Planning Committee by one to 11 (4:5:2) on the understanding that the current Chairs of Employment and Appointments and Planning will remain in post, and that any moves by the current administration to set a budget requiring agreement or implementation through Employment and Appointments will not be unreasonably obstructed. This decision to take effect from November 1st 2011.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie (3 minutes)

Delete all after paragraph (1) and insert:

(2) Council believes that we all have a part to play in mending our 'Broken Council'. Members, Staff and Officers all have a vital part to play and we acknowledge the wonderful work undertaken by many of our much valued and loyal members of staff.

(3) In order to begin to mend our 'Broken Council' Council resolves:

- (a) To take all necessary steps to establish and convene an all party Council Advisory Committee of 11 members (4.5.2) to oversee and guide the long term process of refreshing and renewing the Council's governance arrangements. The terms of reference for this Advisory Committee to be initially determined by the Director of Law
- (b) That with effect from the 1st November 2011 that the size of the Employment and Appointments Committee be increased by one to nine places (4.4.1) and decrease the size of the Planning Committee by one to 11 (4.5.2)
- (c) To adopt an inclusive approach to decision making, taking account of different points of view from across the Council and seeking all party engagement through an all party Cabinet/Executive Board.
- (d) To take immediate action, working with all political groups, to develop a committee system and supporting scheme of delegation to be completed by December 2011 and submitted to Council for adoption as soon as practicable.
- (e) To take immediate action, working with all political groups, to reconfigure the existing Scrutiny arrangements to allow a shadow committee system to be implemented to advise the Leader and, using current strong leader powers of delegation to facilitate this as necessary, to be in place and in use by January 2012 at the latest with reference to extraordinary meetings of the council, if required, prior to implementation.
- (f) To review and, where necessary, remove or amend current officer delegations given by the Leader of the Council (including those relating to the Strategic Change Programme) to ensure transparency, effective democratic oversight and good governance.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

At paragraph (3), delete "and with our own staff."

Add additional paragraph

- (7) Council, therefore, resolves:
 - (a) To advise the Council Leader to extend the membership of the Corporate Governance Cabinet Sub-Committee to include ex-officio membership for the Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups.
 - (b) To establish, as required by minute 89 (Council 14th February 2011) a Working Party of six (2:2:2) to move towards and develop more open and democratic structures within a reformed committee system. The new draft structure to be agreed by the New Year, with the reforms to be formally introduced as soon as the legislation permits, following enactment of the Localism Bill.

- (c) That, with effect from 1st November 2011, the size of the Employment and Appointments Committee be increased to nine places (4:4:1) with a subsequent reduction in Planning Committee places to 11 (4:5:2).'

Right of Reply: Councillor Steve Foulkes (7 minutes)

2. MOTION: A SURE START FOR EVERY CHILD IN WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Sheila Clarke (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Wendy Clements (3 minutes)

- (1) Council believes that the creation of Sure Start Centres was one of the outstanding successes of the previous Government and that all parties support the principle of targeted, early intervention to ensure that no child is left behind.
- (2) Council welcomes the action taken by the previous Administration to protect the budget for Wirral's Children's Centres and the provision of a new grant, direct to each centre, to be invested as local circumstances required.
- (3) Council welcomes the commitment of the Coalition Government to recruit 4,200 qualified Health Visitors to work with Children's Centres to further enhance the service provided to the most vulnerable parents in our communities.
- (4) Council, however, notes with concern the intention of the administration to reduce the Children's Centres budget by £1.2 million without consultation.
- (5) Council therefore requests that parents, staff and partner organisations, and the wider public, are consulted on the proposed changes and a report be brought to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with the results of that consultation before any changes are implemented.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Ann McLachlan (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Tony Smith (3 minutes)

Delete paragraphs (4) and (5) and replace with the following:-

- (4) Council notes that the present Administration is committed to ensuring that our Children's Centres are fully funded and that the current wide ranging provision across the Borough is maintained.
- (5) Council welcomes the success of Wirral's application to pilot a Payment by Results scheme in our Children's Centres. This new way of working will enable us to do more by looking at how we can reward Children's Centres for improving outcomes for families.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Alan Brighthouse (3 minutes)

Delete paragraph (4) and insert:

Council recognises that Children's Centre surplus income has been carried forward over a number of years where there has been slippage in Centre budgets, or where income targets have exceeded estimates. There is an accumulated £1.2m 'one off' balance, dating back to when the Centres first opened, which has no impact on service delivery or budgets in the current year. Council considers that the accrued surplus can be used to support the current budgets covered by the Children's and Young People's Department, without detriment to the Centres. However, for the avoidance of doubt, the detail of this surplus and its proposed use should be reported to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.

Delete paragraph (5)

Right of Reply: Councillor Sheila Clarke (7 minutes)

3. MOTION: INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE

Proposed by Councillor Pat Williams (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Mark Johnston (3 minutes)

(1) This Council:

- (i)** Is delighted that the Peel International Trade Centre is to be opened in the Borough and recognises that there is widespread support for the project in Wirral.
- (ii)** Places on record its appreciation of the co-ordinated action to get people into work
- (iii)** Believes that the opening of the Centre will give an opportunity to get many more people into work.
- (iv)** Views this project as the first step in the development of the areas of derelict docklands.
- (v)** Recognises the need for the council to act as the community leader so that the public, private and voluntary sectors work together to ensure we are ready to welcome new businesses into Wirral.

(2) Council considers that the economic benefit of this and subsequent developments will only be maximised if the community of Wirral work together to prepare the ground during the next three years.

(3) Therefore, having regard to the need to involve the communities in the area around the new development and working closely with Peel, Council resolves to recommend that the Leader:

- (a) Instructs officers to identify the groups which should be involved and to draw up an initial action plan designed to prepare unemployed and the young to work in the development and businesses which will service it.
- (b) Instructs officers to ensure that contact is made with business and other organisations to co-ordinate the work that is being planned.
- (c) Instructs officers to discuss with head teachers the ways in which schools can be involved.
- (d) Instructs officers to work with local communities to ensure that the new businesses are welcomed. Council recognises the importance of local councillors in this, and in particular the Area Forum system.
- (e) Works with the other party leaders to lobby the government for financial and other support as the various projects develop. In addition, the importance of local MPs is recognised therefore, it is essential that they be kept informed.

Right of Reply: Councillor Pat Williams (7 minutes)

4. MOTION: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor George Davies (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council expresses its real concern that the Coalition Government's draft National Planning Policy Framework, as it currently stands, could create a major threat to Wirral's highly valued Green Belt and countryside.
- (2) Council recognises that Wirral residents are fiercely protective of these areas and believes that the Government's decision to advocate a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" fails totally to strike the right balance between growth and the protection of our natural environment, and ensuring the rights of local people to have a real say in what happens where they live.
- (3) Council further expresses its real concern about the apparent removal of the priority to build on Brown Field sites first, which will add further pressure on Green Belt land which is more attractive to builders and developers.
- (4) Council believes that this policy is fundamentally flawed and, if it is not addressed, could lead to a wrecking of Britain's countryside and heritage in the interests of big businesses and property developers, without leading to an increase in affordable housing which is badly needed.
- (5) Council therefore urges this Government to think again, before it is too late.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor David Elderton (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor James Keeley (3 minutes)

Delete all and insert:

- (1) Council notes the Coalition Government's Draft proposals for the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is currently out for consultation.
- (2) Council supports the intention of simplifying the Planning system and recognises the importance of a Planning system that encourages economic development and job creation to the country.
- (3) Council notes that the new planning guidance safeguards valued national protection such as Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as well as ensuring measures which protect wildlife, biodiversity and cultural heritage. By contrast, the previous Government's Regional Strategies were planning to delete the Green Belt, which would have meant more urban sprawl and less protection for the countryside
- (4) Council also notes that as well as protecting the Green Belt, the Framework provides a new designation for councils to protect valued green space which is outside nationally protected areas. The Government's proposals directly state that local plans should minimise adverse effects on the natural environment, meaning there will be no free reign for developers to build wherever they like.
- (5) Therefore Council welcomes the fact that ultimately, local communities will be the driving seat by being able to influence the shape of their local communities, supported by the innovation of neighbourhood planning and increasing the involvement of local residents across our local areas

Right of Reply: Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

5. MOTION: WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Proposed by Councillor Geoffrey Watt (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Cherry Povall (3 minutes)

- (1) Council believes trade unions play a vital part in a functioning democracy and believes they have an important role in a market economy.
- (2) Council notes that some trade union leaders are calling for further industrial action in response to the Coalition Government's reform of public services and the pensions provided to public sector workers.
- (3) Council urges trade union leaders to recognise that:

- Following the debts left by the previous Government, all parties would have been forced to make cuts to public spending, as recognised by the Labour Leader during his Party's Conference.
 - The independent review into the future of public sector pensions, by Labour's former Work and Pensions Secretary, concluded that change was unavoidable.
 - The Coalition Government is working constructively with public sector unions on taking forward future reforms and ministers are meeting unions regularly as part of ongoing engagement on the Government's plans to increase employee pension contributions.
 - The Leader of the Labour Party has refused to back the strikes and has welcomed the trade union reforms introduced by previous Governments.
- (4) Council therefore believes that it is premature to strike while the discussions - set up at the request of the TUC - are ongoing and believes that, in the absence of support from any of the three Party leaders, the union leaders should remain at the negotiating table to seek the best possible deal for their members and the taxpayer.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor George Davies (3 minutes)

Delete all after (1)

Insert:

- (2) Council notes the analysis published by the TUC on 5 September 2011 which found that women's unemployment is set to rise as a result of the Conservative-led Government's public sector jobs cuts.
- (3) Council further notes the TUC resolution on 14 September to defend public sector pensions and campaign for decent pensions for all, recognising everyone deserves dignity in retirement.
- (4) Public sector workers have suffered an on-going pay freeze and cuts to public services and closures of many vital services our communities rely on.
- (5) Now the Government has launched an unprecedented attack on public service pensions. This is not only an injustice but could undermine the viability of some pension schemes.
- (6) Council expresses concern at the Conservative-led Government's mishandling of changes to public sector pensions and the provocative manner of ministers during negotiations.

- (7) Council recognises that the Labour Government took tough decisions on public sector pensions to cap the taxpayers' liability and introduce reformed pensions schemes. Council acknowledges that these decisions were taken in consultation with public sector unions.
- (8) Council agrees that the UK's ageing population means that some public sector pensions will need to change. However Council believes that the approach taken by the government so far has been unfair, is not a genuine attempt to make the schemes more sustainable and is a cash grab by the Treasury imposing an additional tax on workers already facing a pay freeze. The increased contributions are not being used to strengthen the schemes, but are going to the Treasury to pay debts caused by the banking crisis.
- (9) Ministers have failed to engage properly with the millions of public sector workers who will be affected by the changes and take on board their legitimate concerns. Despite lengthy negotiations, the Government has refused to listen or move, leading to union members being balloted on taking strike action as a last resort to show their opposition.
- (10) Council commends the work of public sector workers up and down the country, including Wirral, who provide vital services to everyone and calls for meaningful negotiations to reach satisfactory agreements.

Right of Reply: Councillor Geoffrey Watt (7 minutes)

6. MOTION: CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CRISIS

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

- (1) Council welcomes the Corporate Governance report by AKA Ltd and recognises the seriousness of the findings and the need to take corrective action to put things right.
- (2) Council recognises the significant financial challenges facing Wirral over the next few years, as it strives to provide the level of services local people want and deserve within diminishing financial resources.
- (3) Council believes a "business as usual approach" will simply not do and that a radical and politically brave solution is needed.
- (4) In relation to the AKA report, Council:
 - (a) Requests that the presentation from AKA Ltd to all Councillors as agreed at Cabinet (22nd Sept 2011) be arranged as a matter of urgency.
 - (b) Notes that AKA Ltd has not yet completed a report to review issues raised by a whistleblower relating to concerns in the Department of Adult Social Services Learning Disabilities Services and asks that full information be made available to all Councillors as it becomes available.

- (5) In relation to the current governance structures, Council:
- (a) Has no confidence in the Strong Leader Model of Governance to navigate Wirral Council through this unprecedented period of challenge or to bring the necessary correction to existing cultural, structural and financial problems.
- (6) Going forward, Council:
- (a) Calls on all three Parties to work in unity for the sake of the Wirral residents, businesses, employees of the Council and the reputation of the Council and therefore resolves:
 - (i) To seek the earliest possible abandonment of the Strong Leader Model.
 - (ii) To recommend the Leader of the Council to appoint an emergency All Party Unity Cabinet, to be given the following powers:
 - (1) To develop and recommend to Council a new shadow Committee Structure by January 2012
 - (2) To review the current scheme of delegation and require individual Cabinet Members before taking delegated decisions to consult with the relevant all party shadow committee structure
 - (3) To immediately start processing the recommendations of the Corporate Governance Report and report back to full council regularly on its progress.
- (7) Council believes that new structures should be built on a firm statement of inclusivity, democracy and transparency from the outset and resolves that the following principles apply during the transition and after:
- (a) Membership of committees should reflect the wishes of the electorate at the ballot box and be proportional to seats held.
 - (b) The leadership of the council should normally fall to the largest party represented on the council as expressed by the electorate at the ballot box.

Right of Reply: Councillor Tom Harney (7 minutes)

7. MOTION: SUCCESS OF BIRKENHEAD BUSINESSES

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Jean Stapleton (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council welcomes the recent report from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) which shows that Birkenhead has the highest number of fast growing companies in England, as measured by businesses that have increased by over 20% in each year for the previous three years.

- (2) Council also thanks all Officers who have assisted companies in Wirral to continue trading and in many cases expand their activities.
- (3) Council recognises that the results of the NESTA report are a remarkable achievement in the context of the current difficult economic climate.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly (3 minutes)

Add additional paragraph

- (4) Council requests that the Interim Director of Corporate Services present a report to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee exploring the detail of the NESTA report and the reasons for the success of these businesses, with a view to applying these lessons more widely to support job creation and growth in the private sector and the re-balancing of the local economy.

Right of Reply: Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

8. MOTION: CANCER DRUGS FUND

Proposed by Councillor Cherry Povall (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor James Keeley (3 minutes)

- (1) Council has long been concerned with health inequalities in Wirral and has previously debated survival rates for prostate cancer sufferers in Wirral.
- (2) Council therefore welcomes:
 - The creation by the Coalition Government of a new £200 million Cancer Drugs Fund to enable patients to be given the treatment they need.
 - Reform of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence and the introduction of value-based pricing to enable all patients to access the drugs and treatments their doctors think they need.
 - The decision by the Clatterbridge Centre for Oncology and Primary Care Trust to make available to patients a new drug to extend the life of those suffering from skin cancer.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Anne McArdle (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Pat Glasman (3 minutes)

Delete all after paragraph (1) and replace with the following:

- (2) Council welcomes the £200 million Cancer Drugs Fund to enable patients to be given the treatment they need.
- (3) Council notes that symptom awareness, early referral, diagnosis and early treatment for cancer are essential in improving survival rates and to reduce health inequalities across the Wirral.

Therefore:

- Council expresses concern that the reform of the National Council for Clinical Excellence is a smokescreen for cuts to waiting and treatment time directives which were introduced under the previous Labour Government.
 - That any decisions by CCO, the PCT and the newly established GP Consortia to fund new cancer treatment drugs are made in an open and equal way that does not allow for age discrimination and other undisclosed factors.
- (4) That Wirral Council resists any move to relocate Cancer Services from the present Clatterbridge site to Liverpool.

Right of Reply: Councillor Cherry Povall (7 minutes)

9. MOTION: RESPONSE TO CIVIL DISORDER: BREAKING THE CYCLE

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Pat Williams (3 minutes)

- (1) Council notes with concern and distress the disturbances that took place in Birkenhead on 9th August 2011 and across the country during the same week.
- (2) Council condemns and deplores the behaviour of all those who participated in disorder and other illegal activity, bringing disruption, fear and violence to our streets. The criminal behaviour of a tiny minority of our citizens cannot be excused or tolerated.
- (3) Council congratulates and expresses its sincere thanks to Merseyside Police, Fire and Rescue Service and other emergency services who dealt with matters in a highly professional and dedicated manner. Council also thanks the Courts for their swift response and robust approach to dealing with those found guilty of criminal acts.
- (4) Council praises the resilience, restraint and community spirit demonstrated by the overwhelming majority of residents of the Borough.
- (5) Council believes that the community response to the disorder more accurately reflects the state of our communities than the disturbances themselves, but further believes that it is important that the causes of the disorder are identified, understood and dealt with through long term measures and thoughtful consideration of the issues.

- (6) Whilst there can be no excuses for the behaviour of those involved in the disorder, Council recognises the damaging affects of poverty and worklessness and its role in creating social exclusion and therefore welcomes the draft child poverty strategy report to Cabinet. Council welcomes the contribution to its development from the Wirral Child and Family Poverty Working Group and thanks the voluntary and faith sector representatives, officers and councillors who have served on it.
- (7) In particular, Council believes the following issues identified in the draft strategy are crucial to ensuring that that no young people are left behind or excluded from our society and that action in these areas should help contribute to ensuring the August disturbances are never repeated:
- Targeting efforts to make work the best route out of poverty
 - Improving life chances for children through early interventions such as: support for effective parenting, promoting social and emotional development through greater emphasis on the early years and closing the gap in educational attainment
 - Supporting neighbourhoods by building on community assets
- (8) Council requests the Leader to ensure that the recommendations in the report form the basis of a robust and properly resourced action plan that is embedded into the work programme of the authority. The cycle of child and family poverty is a generational blight on some of our communities and breaking into this damaging pattern must be a priority of this Council. Council requests that regular updates of progress in implementing the recommendations are provided to the Children and Young People and Economy & Regeneration Scrutiny Committees.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Pat Hackett (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Tony Smith (3 minutes)

Insert after paragraph (5) and renumber accordingly:

Council notes the report just published by the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies which shows that the next two years will be “dominated by a large decline” in incomes, pushing an extra 600,000 children and 800,000 adults of working age into absolute poverty by 2012/13, and creating a situation by 2013 where 2.5m working age parents and 4m working age adults without children will be in absolute poverty.

Council further notes that the consequences of actions taken by this government mean that targets set in 2010 for the reduction of child poverty will be missed by up to 23%.

Council recognises that the public perception is that savage public spending cuts are being inflicted on ordinary people, while the bankers who caused the original problems continue to flourish and enjoy high bonuses, and while rich corporations

successfully avoid paying billions in tax which could have been used instead to help reduce the deficit and mitigate the consequences of damaging cuts.

Council also notes that by 2015 Merseyside Police will have been forced to cut their budget by £66m as a consequence of this Coalition government's policies and expresses its concern that their ability to maintain the level of protection which helped protect lives and properties during the disorder in Birkenhead on 9th August could be affected.

Council believes that these issues create a climate where future disorder is increasingly likely.

Continue with former paragraph 6 "Whilst there can be no excuses for the behaviour etc."

Right of Reply: Councillor Mark Johnston (7 minutes)

10. MOTION: LINKS WITH CHINA

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes (3 minutes)

- (1) This Council recognises the significant potential of investment by Chinese businesses to contribute to the future economic prosperity of Wirral, including the creation of substantial numbers of new employment opportunities for local residents.
- (2) Council acknowledges the importance of the recent visit to China by a joint delegation from Wirral Council and Peel Holdings to discuss the proposed International Trade Centre at Wirral Waters with representatives of businesses and government from the cities of Suzhou, Taicang and Jiang Yin. These discussions indicated a high level of interest by Chinese businesses in investing in the Trade Centre and will be followed up with more detailed conversations with a view to securing contracts.
- (3) Council also recognises the importance of the Sister City Agreement signed by the Mayor of Taicang and the Deputy Leader of the Council on the 29th of September.
- (4) This will facilitate the development of important links between Wirral and Taicang on a range of issues including economic development, port related activities, tourism, education, culture and heritage. These links will be further developed during 2012 when a delegation from Taicang will visit Wirral.

Right of Reply: Councillor Phil Davies (7 minutes)

11. MOTION: FAIRER, SAFER VOTING

Proposed by Councillor Ian Lewis (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Chris Blakeley (3 minutes)

- (1) Council welcomes the commitment by the Coalition Government to reduce electoral fraud by the introduction of Individual Voter Registration.
- (2) Council therefore requests a report on how this will be implemented by the Council to be brought to a meeting of the Licensing, Health and Safety and General Purposes Committee.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Whittingham (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Darren Dodd (3 minutes)

Replace all text with the following:

- (1) Council notes with concern the view of the Chair of The Electoral Commission that up to 10 million voters could fall off the register if voluntary Individual Voter Registration is introduced.
- (2) Council is also concerned that the proposal to remove the compulsion to register will result in further disenfranchisement from the political process for many people.
- (3) Council therefore calls upon the Coalition Government to rethink the proposals to introduce voluntary Individual Voter Registration and ensure that everyone that is eligible to vote is on the electoral register.

AMENDMENT

Proposed by Councillor Dave Mitchell (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Bob Wilkins (3 minutes)

Add to the end of paragraph (2):

"This report to include recommendations on ways to increase voter registration and ensure that everyone who is entitled to vote is registered to vote."

Right of Reply: Councillor Ian Lewis (7 minutes)

12. MOTION: SMOKING BAN IN OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS

Proposed by Councillor Pat Williams (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell (3 minutes)

This Council:

- A. Notes that other local authorities within the UK, such as Inverclyde and Pendle, have or are in the process of implementing smoking bans in children's play areas and that many other areas are considering it.

- B. Notes that Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Control Alliance, in partnership with Heart of Mersey are campaigning to implement a voluntary smoke-free code within playground areas on council owned land across the North West sub-region.
- C. Notes that research suggests public support for smoke-free play areas is high: A YouGov survey undertaken by ASH in March 2010 found that 73% of the general population backed a smoking ban in children's play areas.
- D. Believes that, in the long term, smoke-free play areas will assist in decreasing the number of young people who start smoking and will also help to reduce levels of unsightly cigarette litter such as cigarette butts, matches, empty packets and wrappers in children's play areas.

Therefore, Council:

- (1) States support for the principle of a voluntary smoking ban in children's play areas within Wirral.
- (2) Welcomes preparatory work undertaken to date to gauge local support for smoking bans in play areas and in parks and urges consultation with playground users to assess support for this initiative.
- (3) Requests the Leader to instruct officers to continue work, in partnership with the Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Control Alliance, to bring forward implementation plans for a voluntary smoke-free code for play areas in Wirral, with a view to introduction from early 2012 (subject to the outcome of consultations). Plans to include a smoke-free policy statement, training and enforcement programme, public awareness raising and a timetable for evaluation of the effectiveness of the smoke-free code.
- (4) Instructs the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to prepare a report for the Health and Wellbeing, Children and Young People and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees as to how powers contained in the Localism Bill may facilitate the introduction of legally enforceable bans.

Right of Reply: Councillor Pat Williams (7 minutes)

13. MOTION: APPOINTMENT OF METROPOLITAN POLICE COMMISSIONER

Proposed by Councillor Bob Wilkins (7 minutes)

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly (3 minutes)

This Council congratulates former Merseyside Police chief Bernard Hogan-Howe on his recent appointment as Metropolitan Police Commissioner and instructs the Chief Executive to write him a letter of congratulations and thanks on behalf of the Council.

Right of Reply: Councillor Bob Wilkins (7 minutes)