

# Council – 15 July 2013

## Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 7(1) and are listed in the order received.

### 1. WHISTLE-BLOWING

**Proposed** by Councillor Jeff Green

**Seconded** by Councillor Lesley Rennie

- (1) Council notes that on the 19 June 2013 the CQC published an independent report into its registration and oversight of University Hospitals Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust where up to 16 baby deaths and 2 maternal deaths could be attributed to poor quality of care. A significant part of this report focussed on the '11 questions' raised by Care Quality Commission (CQC) whistle-blower Kay Sheldon.
- (2) Mrs. Sheldon, a non-executive Board Member of the CQC, had previously given evidence to the Francis Inquiry concerning high mortality rates at Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust. Within her evidence Kay Sheldon states that the final straw for her to contact the inquiry was that she had been trying to raise concerns for quite sometime and the Chair of the CQC had been trying to undermine Mrs. Sheldon by suggesting she was mentally unstable.
- (3) Council further notes the recent publication from the National Audit Office "Confidentiality clause and special severance payments" where the Head of the Audit Office stated "it is important that compromise agreements do not leave staff feeling gagged or reward failure either of an employee or an organisation."
- (4) Council believes that Martin Morton would be able to draw parallels between Mrs. Sheldon's experiences at the CQC and his own experiences at Wirral Borough Council where he blew the whistle on Wirral Borough Council that led to the ordering of the AKA investigation and subsequent report which found that the abnormal had become the norm.
- (5) Martin has received no justice – his life has been ruined and both the AKA report and Martin Smith reports vindicated him. Let us not forget that Martin stood up for those vulnerable adults who couldn't stand up for themselves and was hounded out of his job for doing so. Council is therefore extremely dissatisfied that, over two years on from the publication of the Martin Smith and AKA reports, the Administration have been unable to find an acceptable resolution with Martin Morton.
- (6) Council is further disappointed to note that, along with the public, it has never received an adequate explanation into the sequence of events that allowed two senior members of staff implicated in the Martin Morton whistle-blow to leave, under compromise agreements, less than 1 working day prior to the publication

of the AKA report and exactly what role the then leadership of the Council had in that decision.

- (7) Council therefore requests the Chief Executive to:
- (a) brief the three party leaders about the current state of discussions with Martin Morton and produce a timeline for resolution;
  - (b) conduct a review of all the circumstances surrounding the decision to allow two senior members of staff implicated in the Martin Morton whistle-blow to leave, under compromise agreements and present that review to the three party leaders at the September Leaders' Board prior to full publication.

## **2. LOCAL INVESTMENT IN RAIL - HIGH SPEED2 & BORDERLANDS RAILWAY**

**Proposed** by Councillor Stuart Kelly  
**Seconded** by Councillor Alan Brighthouse

- (1) Council welcomes the Government's announcement on the High Speed Rail network, (HS2), and notes that high speed trains will leave from Wirral's nearest intercity terminal at Liverpool travelling to London via Crewe in 1hr 36m and believes this will be of great benefit to the regional economy.
- (2) Council further welcomes the investment in overhead electrification of the line from Liverpool to Manchester. The project is expected to be completed, ahead of schedule, in 2014, enabling Liverpool to Manchester journey times to be reduced from 47m to 30m.
- (3) However, Council believes more can be done to improve rail performance and infrastructure in the region and calls on the appropriate authorities to:
  - Ensure that the track and services between Liverpool and Crewe meet the region's needs and aspirations;
  - Re-consider the proposal for phased improvements to the Borderlines railway, with new stations at Beechwood and Prenton, which would potentially open up new employment opportunities for Wirral residents in North Wales;
  - Examine options that would increase train speeds and frequencies into Chester.
- (4) Council asks that the appropriate Cabinet member makes the terms of this Motion known to the Liverpool City Region Transport Body, Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority, and the City Region Local Enterprise Partnership for their information and support.

Recommendation to the Mayor – it is suggested that this Motion be referred to Cabinet to enable an Executive response to the issues to be raised with the Bodies mentioned in the body of the Motion in accordance with SO7(4).

### **3. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW ANNOUNCEMENT – 27TH JUNE 2013**

**Proposed** by Councillor Phil Davies

**Seconded** by Councillor Ann McLachlan

- (1) Council notes that the Government's efforts to deal with the deficit so far have focussed on cutting public spending. Since 2010, 1,500 fire fighters have lost their jobs; over 300 libraries and 400 Sure Start centres have closed; police numbers have been reduced by over 6,000 and there are 5,000 fewer nurses. The rise in people relying on food banks is a clear sign that many are facing high levels of economic and social distress.
- (2) There is a strong case that local authorities should be encouraged to invest in growth. Local government is demonstrating its ability to drive growth by providing infrastructure investment and supporting local businesses. Allowing local government to borrow in line with prudential rules will enable us to invest in building houses and create desperately needed jobs.
- (3) Councils have been handed some of the deepest cuts in the public sector. Local authorities have seen their budgets cut by 33% in comparison to 8% across Whitehall departments.
- (4) The additional 10 per cent reduction announced by the Chancellor in the Comprehensive Spending Review on the 27th June confirms local government as the hardest hit part of the public sector and, according to Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the Local Government Association, will 'stretch essential services such as culture and leisure facilities, school support, road maintenance and growth to breaking point in many areas'.
- (5) This additional cut will equate to Wirral Council having to make savings of between £13.5m and £24m during the period 2015 to 2018. This is on top of the £109m savings the Council has to make between 2012 and 2015.
- (6) At a time of increased unemployment, Council believes that the nation's safety net has been seriously compromised. The bedroom tax, council tax benefit reductions and other cuts will mean that many people will struggle to keep their heads above water.
- (7) Council believes that the government should be supporting those who are being hit hardest by the economic downturn. Scrapping the bedroom tax and looking again at the costs to families of all the benefit changes should be a priority before giving tax cuts to the richest people in the country.

#### **4. CUTS TO MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

**Proposed** by Councillor Denise Roberts

**Seconded** by Councillor Jean Stapleton

- (1) Wirral Council recognises the excellent work undertaken by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and applauds the commitment of its frontline and support staff. This Council also notes that those individuals' ability to protect the people of Wirral is being jeopardised by the Government cuts to funding as well as undermining staff morale.
- (2) This Council is deeply concerned by the findings of the Ken Knight review of fire and rescue services which makes the case for further huge cuts, mergers with other Authorities or Police Crime Commissioners and most worryingly privatisation. The Ken Knight review gives very little recognition of the very difficult decisions taken by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority to date in managing the deepest cuts inflicted on any Authority in the Country and instead advocates its replacement by a PCC without any evidence whatsoever to prove that this would improve the service delivered to the residents of this city region.
- (3) This Council notes with serious concern the Government's alarming proposals to privatise part if not all functions of the fire and rescue service, along with yet further cuts to their grant funding which will impact on their ability in protecting residents from fire, road traffic collisions and other emergencies within the Borough of Wirral.
- (4) This Council is deeply worried that the Government has lost sight of the fire service's main purpose, to protect residents from fire, road traffic collisions and other emergencies and their devastating impact on our communities and that it threatens to put private profit ahead of the need to save lives and help people feel safe in their homes and community.
- (5) This Council further notes that the Government's proposals are in the context of a programme of ill-conceived efficiencies to fire and rescue services. The impact this will have on the communities of Merseyside is extremely worrying and places vulnerable residents in danger.
- (6) This Council also notes due to Government cuts which has seen Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service suffer cuts totalling £19.2m over the 4 year spending review with 180 firefighters posts deleted and a reduction in Fire engines from 42 to 28 by 2015.
- (7) The Government's proposal for further huge cuts in 2015 will have devastating effects on operational response and the community safety and prevention work delivered by the Authority to such an excellent standard.
- (8) This Council therefore calls on the Government, in particular the Secretary of State for Local Government and the Chancellor's department to cease their ill conceived and irresponsible cuts to our fire and rescue services and pledge

instead to protect the public from further risk of fire by protecting this front line emergency service from further cuts and threats of privatisation.