

Metropolitan Borough of Wirral

CALL-IN

Decision of Cabinet to be called in:

Date of meeting	Monday 27 th June 2016
Minute number	Cabinet Minute 20
Subject	Keeping Residents Informed

Reason(s) for call-in:

To date the Secretary of State has issued Directions under section 4A of the Local Government Act 1986 to 11 Councils relating to council publications. All 11 Directions have included references to the contravention of frequency of publication specifically: "where local authorities do commission or publish newsletters, newsheets of similar communications, they should not issue them more than quarterly."

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has spent £48,000 in legal fees defending its publication 'Greenwich Times' which the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) argued contravened the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity. The Greenwich Times was published for the last time by Greenwich Council on 28th June 2016 following an agreement with the DCLG to abide by the Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity. We believe it is a costly miscalculation for the Labour Cabinet to believe it is somehow above Government guidance.

Within the Cabinet report and at the subsequent Cabinet meeting there was absolutely no consideration given to the variety of successful community publications that operate across Wirral. We believe this shows a complete disregard for the years of hard work that a great number of community activists have given to Wirral and jeopardises the invaluable goodwill that the Council relies upon to deliver its significant community engagement agenda.

We believe this is not the time for novices to the newspaper industry to be launching a new print title. Wirral has two established, free, independent newspaper titles the Wirral News - circulation 28,095 copies and Wirral Globe total circulation 97,368 copies (71% of households). The Labour Administration cannot control what these papers print and we are concerned that this may be the driving force behind the creation of this Town Hall Pravda.

The Government has shown it is committed to ensuring that the independent free press does not face unfair competition from municipal publications. We believe Cabinet's disregard for Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity is tantamount to Labour playing fast and loose with Council Taxpayers money.

Called in by:

Councillors:

Jeff Green	
Ian Lewis	
Tom Anderson	
Bruce Berry	
Chris Blakeley	
Eddie Boulton	
David Burgess-Joyce	
Wendy Clements	
David Elderton	
Gerry Ellis	
John Hale	
Paul Hayes	
Andrew Hodson	
Kathy Hodson	

Tracey Pilgrim		
Cherry Povall		
Lesley Rennie		
Les Rowlands		
Adam Sykes		
Geoffrey Watt		
Steve Williams		