

# Council – 10 July, 2017

## Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 7(1) and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 7(2).

### 1. ENDING AUSTERITY *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Janette Williamson

**Seconded** by Councillor Phil Davies

The outcome of the general election on the 8th June has left the country in a position of even greater uncertainty than before it was called. The Prime Minister is scrabbling around to create deals and cooperation agreements with a political party on the far fringes of UK politics which has taken regressive stances on issues such as climate change, evolution, abortion and homosexuality. This is being done in a desperate bid to cling on to power, while residents in Wirral and elsewhere are unsure if vital services - NHS, police, fire, education and local authority services such as support for the elderly, the vulnerable and the young - will survive another dose of Tory austerity. And in the chaos created by the Conservatives, it is now unclear what funding will replace the withdrawal of the revenue support grant in 2020.

The outcome of the general election should send a clear message to the Conservatives that the overwhelming majority of residents of Wirral reject the austerity policies which have decimated local services over the past seven years. This Council agrees to write to the Prime Minister to urge her to abandon her government's failed austerity agenda and commit to providing a fair funding formula that supports local authorities such as Wirral to deliver the vital public services local residents expect.

### 2. TENANCY FEES *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Ian Lewis

**Seconded** by Councillor Tom Anderson

Council notes that people seeking affordable homes to rent are too often faced with unfair tenancy fees which prevent them from obtaining suitable accommodation or leaves them with additional debt and financial stress.

Council therefore welcomes proposals to make the private rental market more affordable by introducing a ban on landlords and agents from requiring tenants to make any payments as a condition of their tenancy with the exception of:

- the rent
- a capped refundable security deposit
- capped refundable holding deposit and tenant default fees

Council supports measures that will cap holding deposits at no more than one week's rent and security deposits at no more than one month's rent.

Council therefore urges existing registered social landlords, private landlords and the Private Landlords Forum to participate in pre-legislative consultation and to ensure changes to information, advice and guidance for tenants post legislation.

### **3. LOSS OF SOCIAL HOUSING TO BAMBOO LETTINGS LLP** *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Stuart Kelly

**Seconded** by Councillor Chris Carubia

Council notes the establishment of a private lettings company known as Bamboo Lettings LLP between Magenta Living and a housing organisation called Torus.

Council notes that Magenta are planning to transfer under a lease arrangement up to 100 social housing homes to Bamboo Lettings company for them to be let at full market rents.

Council notes that a three bedroom house offered for let by Bamboo in the Woodchurch area will cost a prospective tenant £137 per week against the social rent charged by Magenta of circa £97 per week in the same area (and against an 'affordable' rent level of £110).

In addition, Council is concerned that Bamboo Lettings also charge private sector style 'fees'; an example of these fees for a three bedroom house in the Woodchurch area is:

- Application fee - £50
- Administration fee - £75
- Guarantor fee - £50
- Check out fee - £60
- Additional deposit for a pet - £100

Council believes that these fees are not linked to the service provided, are unacceptable and extortionate and requests a justification for this regime.

Council notes the Cabinet Member for Housing has told Magenta that Wirral Council would not want to see larger 4 bedroom accommodation, those for older people and those adapted properties being transferred; and has highlighted to Magenta concerns about a number of disposals occurring in the same popular locations, thus reducing availability of social housing stock.

Council notes that there are currently 9643 people registered on the Choice Based Lettings System, of which 2348 have a housing priority need.

Council has objections to the use of social housing in this way and requests (through the Council's Managing Director for Delivery to Magenta Living) that the relationship

with Torus/Bamboo be suspended to allow the Council the opportunity to fully investigate the use of social housing stock as de facto private rented houses.

#### **4. SUPPORT FOR NEW FERRY** *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Warren Ward

**Seconded** by Councillor Phil Davies

Following the devastating explosion in New Ferry, hundreds of Wirral residents and businesses have been affected. Residents' homes have been destroyed or badly damaged and local businesses have had to close, forcing many local people into unemployment, along with hundreds of residents who were injured, including the tragic case of a 21 year-old man who almost lost his life.

On behalf of the people of New Ferry and Port Sunlight, this Council agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and also the Prime Minister to urge the government to provide New Ferry with urgent financial support and to meet with community leaders and residents affected on site in New Ferry for them to see first-hand the absolute devastation caused by the explosion.

#### **5. SECURING OUR ECONOMY IN AN UNCERTAIN WORLD** *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

**Seconded** by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes that the Queen's Speech included commitments to honour the process of Brexit as interpreted by the Government. In particular, it aspired to securing 'the best possible deal', building the 'widest possible consensus' for our future 'outside the European union', providing 'certainty for individuals and businesses' and 'forging new trading relationships across the globe'.

Council also notes that, in his Mansion House speech, the Chancellor of the Exchequer placed his emphasis on 'maintaining our strong trade links with European markets after we leave the EU, as well as seeking out new opportunities for trade and investment with old friends and fast growing emerging economies alike'.

Council is anxious, however, that the route to reaching these new arrangements is unlikely to be smooth and without difficulty and will have an impact on the national and Wirral economy. The Wirral economy benefits greatly from the presence of Vauxhalls. There is a real risk of administrative barriers, paperwork and tariffs affecting the supply chains, ease of assembly and production of vehicles.

Council, therefore, appreciates the concerns put by Mike Hawes, Chief Executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, who has reportedly said:

*"We waited patiently to hear how the Government square the circle of leaving the single market and the customs union while maintaining our competitiveness. We have asked for clarity and certainty".*

Our region benefits from the contribution of other leading manufacturers. Council also appreciates the concerns set out by the EEF (formerly the Engineering Employers' Federation) regarding access to the single market and inward investment, believing that these issues are highly relevant to the Wirral economy.

Council, therefore, hopes that the Government will do all it can to maintain the ease with which British businesses trade with their European counterparts and sell to European consumers. Council is of the belief that the single market is essential if we are to continue to trade freely and easily as a nation and that relationship remains important to the national, regional and local economy.

Council also seeks an early resolution on EU citizens' rights in this country and is of the view that this is necessary for many sectors of the regional economy, from the exchange of ideas and research in our universities through to those working for our society in the NHS and caring sectors. Council welcomes their continuing contribution to all those sectors.

Council is alarmed at reports that the number of European Union nurses coming to work in the UK has continued to fall since last summer, with many fewer joining the Nursing and Midwifery Council register. Council asks officers to obtain an up-to-date assessment of how this may be reflected in the local NHS.

Council, therefore, believes it is important to work closely with Wirral's MPs to minimise the uncertainty and damage to our economy and services from Brexit, urges that they do their utmost to retain the advantages of the single market and work to secure whatever transitional arrangements are necessary to cope with the needs of the Wirral, regional and national economy.

## **6. GRENFELL TOWER DISASTER** *(to be debated)*

**Proposed** by Councillor George Davies

**Seconded** by Councillor Phil Davies

Council sends its condolences and support to all those impacted by the tragic events in west London on 14 June, 2017. We also add our thanks to all those in the emergency services who acted so bravely and responded so quickly to limit the loss of life and injury.

For many in local government, housing associations, resident and community groups, it has raised questions about the safety of similar high rise accommodation and buildings and how we can prevent any repeat of these incidents.

Council welcomes the creation of Wirral's Tower Block Co-ordination Group. This group under the chair of Cllr George Davies, Cabinet Member for Housing & Community Safety, brings together representatives from various organisations including the Fire Authority, Housing Associations and appropriate Council departments, to provide answers to the numerous questions residents and others will raise regarding safety and other issues.

Wirral Council joins the call from local authorities across the country for central government to be clear in declaring it will work in a positive and constructive manner with Councils, local housing associations and building owners to adequately support the immediate safety reviews and inspections required. Furthermore, it will provide emergency support for any local residents who are potentially displaced or inconvenienced as a consequence of these investigations and will ensure Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service are adequately resourced to have the equipment and personnel to respond to incidents involving high rise buildings.

Council believes this matter is above party politics and calls on all members from across the political divides to unanimously support this motion.

## **7. FAIR VOTES** *(the Civic Mayor to refer to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee)*

**Proposed** by Councillor Pat Cleary

**Seconded** by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Council believes that a Parliament that more accurately reflects the views of the nation, enabling people to feel that their votes count, is more likely to develop an economic, social and environmental agenda that benefits Wirral's residents.

Following the recent general election, this Council agrees that the 'First Past the Post' voting system:

- has again failed to live up to its reputation to provide strong and stable government;
- has again yielded a wildly disproportionate allocation of seats with, for example, the Democratic Unionist Party gaining 10 seats from 292,316 votes compared with 12 seats from 2.4 million votes for the Liberal Democrats;
- has spectacularly failed to match votes to seats with 27,930 votes required to elect one MP from the Scottish National Party compared with 525,371 votes to elect one Green Party MP.

This Council:

- (a) recognises that a robust democracy must include a fair voting system and that nobody should be disenfranchised because of where they live;
- (b) applauds the many groups and organisations campaigning for fair votes including the Electoral Reform Society, Make Votes Matter and the Labour Campaign for PR;
- (c) notes that the Single Transferable Vote system is already used for local elections in Scotland and in both Northern Irish local elections and the Northern Ireland

Assembly while proportional electoral systems are used to elect the devolved parliaments and assemblies in Scotland, Wales and London;

- (d) therefore calls for the introduction of a proportional voting system
  - (i) for local elections in England and Wales;
  - (ii) for Westminster elections; and
- (e) directs that a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Leaders of all political parties represented in the UK Parliament.