

Council – 10 December, 2018

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. ON-GOING IMPACT OF NEW FERRY EXPLOSION *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird

Seconded by Councillor Joe Walsh

- (1) Council notes that the impact of the gas explosion in New Ferry is not over. Some families are facing their second Christmas in temporary accommodation. Some businesses have had to shut up shop.
- (2) Council is disappointed the Government has failed to provide any direct financial support to help deal with the disruption and damage caused in the New Ferry explosion.
- (3) Council notes that 12 months have passed since Wirral Council on behalf of residents and businesses submitted a full Regeneration Plan to the Secretary of State and have not received any direct support for the rebuilding of New Ferry town centre.
- (4) Council notes that James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, has written to Alison McGovern MP more than two months after she led a delegation to Westminster to demand action.
- (5) Council is concerned that James Brokenshire's letter incorrectly claims that Wirral Council has never requested funding support.
- (6) Council notes that the Leader of the Council wrote to the minister on 7th July 2017 asking for £500,000 to help with the costs of emergency help, and the minister replied on 17th July 2017 declining support saying: "for an incident of this size and impact we would expect these costs to be covered using existing local resources."
- (7) Council further notes that following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Salisbury attack, the Belfast City Centre fire, and the shop fire in Hinckley Leicestershire, the Government quickly mobilised support for those communities and is disappointed a similar response wasn't made for the people of New Ferry.
- (8) Council requests the Leader and Cabinet to:
 - (i). Write to James Brokenshire to set the record straight and call upon the Government to support the New Ferry Regeneration Plan.

- (ii). Continue to work with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to access the £500,000 available through the Mayor's Town Centre Fund.
- (iii). Encourage applications from the Local Welfare Assistance Fund from people directly affected by the blast.
- (iv). Submit a formal application for funding under the Bellwin scheme as soon as possible.
- (v). Work with Alison McGovern MP, local ward members, New Ferry Town Team, local residents, traders and other partners to ensure plans are delivered to support a thriving and regenerated New Ferry.

2. POST OFFICE SERVICES *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Paul Hayes

Seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis

Council welcomes the government investment of more than £2 billion since 2010 and notes the Post Office now has:

- a stable network of around 11,600 branches
- modernised more than 7,500 branches with new technology
- extended opening hours on weekdays and at weekends
- become the UK's largest Sunday retailer with more than 4,400 branches open
- ensured 93% of people now live within one mile of their nearest branch.

Council however regrets that Post Office branches in Wallasey Village, New Brighton and Upton are among those currently closed, due to national 'audit' and system irregularities and requests the Chief Executive writes to the Post Office to relay these concerns and request urgent and speedy resolution to enable all Wirral residents to have access to a local Post Office, serving their communities.

3. TAKING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO REFORM UNIVERSAL CREDIT

(to be debated)

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia

This Council welcomes the work on the difficulties facing recipients of Universal Credit undertaken by the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Council notes that the work continued under the Chairmanship of Councillor Hackett and concluded in July and September this year.

Council notes that the introduction, roll out and operation of Universal Credit has remained an issue of considerable public concern. Council notes that Wirral's MPs raised concerns about the operation of Universal Credit in the Commons on 17 October 2018

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-10-17/debates/CD3131AC-C7F0-4DB6-A4EF-05191F92642F/UniversalCredit#contribution-D8EA2220-AB8D-4499-AA45-687AED39EED6>

Opportunities to address and correct the financial injustices were taken by two Wirral Members of Parliament, the Rt Hon Frank Field and the Member for Wirral South, Alison McGovern, who supported an Amendment put forward by the Liberal Democrats. It is regrettable that the Amendment was not more widely supported.

Following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget in October, some changes are expected to be made in the financing and operation of the system. The financial effects of the system led Iain Duncan Smith, the former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, to resign in March 2016. In his resignation letter, he stated...

"Too often my team and I will have been pressured in the immediate run-up to a budget or fiscal event to deliver yet more reductions to the working age benefit bill. There has been too much emphasis on money saving exercises and not enough awareness from the Treasury, in particular, that the government's vision of a new welfare-to-work system could not repeatedly be salami-sliced."

Whilst some changes have been made, the resignation of the Secretary of State, Esther McVey, has presented an opportunity for the new Secretary of State, Amber Rudd, to be pressed to take a fresh look at the changes needed to Universal Credit.

Council, therefore, wishes to work through the Local Government Association and support Wirral's Members of Parliament in continued approaches to deal with the problems causing hardship to recipients.

4. CLIMATE EMERGENCY *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Pat Cleary

Seconded by Councillor Mike Sullivan

Council notes the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report 'Global warming of 1.5°' published on 8 October 2018, in particular:

that human activities are estimated to have already caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels;

that if we continue at the current rate, we are likely to surpass the Paris Agreement target of 1.5°C as early as 2030;

that, at the current level of commitments, the world is on course for at least 3°C of warming with irreversible and catastrophic consequences for humans and the natural world.

Council believes that:

the impacts of global temperature rise above 1.5°C, are so severe that governments at all levels must work together and make this their top priority.

as well as large-scale improvements in health and wellbeing around the world, bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities.

Therefore, Council requests that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee establish an Overview and Scrutiny Committee working group, with a remit to

- (i). Seek advice from experts to develop a robust carbon budget and set a challenging target date for carbon neutrality in Wirral;
- (ii). Consider systematically the climate change impact of each area of the Council's activities;
- (iii). Make recommendations and set an ambitious timescale for reducing these impacts;
- (iv). Report to full Council with the actions the Council needs to take to address this emergency.

In addition, Council further requests that the Leader & Cabinet:

- require all report risk assessments should include Carbon Emission Appraisals, including presenting alternative approaches which reduce emissions wherever possible.
- task a director level officer with responsibility for reducing as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities.
- writes to inform the Prime Minister that Wirral has declared a climate emergency.

5. CUTS TO MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Chris Meaden

This Wirral Council believes that the cuts imposed by Government on Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (MFRA) have gone too far and should be reversed to ensure public safety is protected. To this end the Council will work in collaboration with MFRA, Merseyside's constituent District Councils, Mayors Anderson and Rotherham, MP's the FBU and all trade unions to jointly lobby Government to demand assurances that, the cuts imposed on the Authority be reversed and that the case for increased funding for MFRA will be fully considered on the basis of public safety.

This Council also supports the Fire & Rescue Authority's position when demanding assurances that, as an absolute minimum, Government commit to ensuring that there will be no further grant reductions applied to MFRA and that the Authority will be fully protected in relation to any new financial burdens.

Finally, the Council demands the removal of the government imposed 'cap' on the Council Tax flexibility thereby allowing local application of Council Tax arrangements in order to fully protect the public.

6. A FREE SCHOOL FOR WIRRAL *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Cherry Povall

Council welcomes the submission of an application by the Frank Field Education Trust to open a Free School in the Borough. Council expresses its support to the Trust in its application and requests that the Leader and Cabinet and officers help support this exciting new addition to education and learning in the Borough to extend parental choice, raise aspiration and improve outcomes.

7. TIME TO END THE HOYLAKE GOLF COURSE DEVELOPMENT

(to be debated)

Proposed by Councillor Allan Brame

Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary

Council notes that a recent report to Cabinet on the "Future Provision of Golf Courses" included these comments:

- (1) "...with the national trend in golf usage being generally down, (not just for municipal golf courses but also for the majority of private golf clubs)..."
- (2) "Participation in municipal golf in Wirral is in decline and follows a national trend in that people tend to have less disposable leisure time to spend on playing a five or six hour round of golf. Those people that would have traditionally played golf in the past have migrated to a more 'time determined' sport (such as cycling, running, fitness) to fulfil their leisure time demands."

Given this gloomy assessment of current and future demand for golf facilities, Council recognises that the proposed Celtic Manor development of Hoylake Golf Course looks increasingly unviable.

Council now concludes that the access to prudential borrowing of £26 million agreed in December 2017 poses an unacceptable risk to public funds is no longer tenable or appropriate and therefore requests that the Leader and Cabinet end all further use of Council taxpayers' money to support this scheme.

8. PAID LEAVE FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE VICTIMS *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Paul Stuart

Seconded by Councillor Anita Leech

Council welcomes the recent review of Wirral Council's domestic abuse policy, guaranteeing employees of Wirral Borough Council who are victims of domestic abuse and coercive control, a minimum of one week paid leave in addition to the council special leave policy.

Wirral Council also calls on its partner agencies and local businesses to adopt similar policies.

Wirral Council welcomes the government's consultation and preparation of a draft bill on domestic abuse; endorses the Home Affairs Select Committee's report and recommendations; and calls on the government to adopt them in full.

Council calls on the UK government to bring legislation into the Domestic Abuse Bill that will give victims of domestic abuse guaranteed paid leave.

9. POLICE CRIME COMMISSIONERS TO RETHINK POLICING PRIORITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF WIRRAL RESIDENTS *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Tony Cox

Seconded by Councillor Andrew Gardner

As the person with sole responsibility for policing priority in Merseyside, Council recognises that the position of PCC is an onerous role.

Council also recognises the fact that, nationally, there are now more police officers per capita than there were in the 1960s. In fact, in 1961 it was 807 people for every officer and now it is just 462 people for every officer.

Council believes that there is far too much focus placed on monitoring minor 'online offences', many which are dismissed with few prosecutions brought, and not enough on 'real world' crime.

With notable people such as Chief Constable Sara Thornton, head of the new National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), saying, 'I want us to solve more burglaries and bear down on violence before we make more records of incidents that are not crimes,' It would seem that senior police officials are finally breaking rank and calling out the current, ridiculous state of affairs.

With a noticeable upturn in crime in the West Kirby area – from criminal damage, sexual acts in public, assault and even a knife attack – Council believes that Wirral residents deserve the same level of policing focus as the rest of Merseyside.

Therefore, Council calls upon the PCC, Jane Kennedy, to review the priorities she sets her Police Force in order to deal with the crimes that really hurt people. The crimes that have people fearful in their own home and in their communities – criminal damage, burglary, theft and violent crime – and to bring some perspective and common sense back to policing.

10. TAKING BACK CONTROL OF OUR BUSES *(to be debated)*

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly
Seconded by Councillor Allan Brame

This Council notes that the decision of Avon Bus Services to cease trading at short notice on 5 October left huge gaps in Wirral's bus service provision, including school buses.

Council places on record its thanks to members of Merseytravel's Bus Services team for the work they have done to expedite the process for re-providing services and notes the positives that resulted from that exercise, including a reintroduced 91 bus service to Oxton Village and the introduction of replacement bus services, such as the 16/17, from South Wirral to Arrowe Park Hospital.

Council expresses its concern that there remain gaps in bus service provision, notably the loss of the 492/495 evening and Sunday service that linked Oxton/Noctorum/Beechwood to Arrowe Park Hospital.

Council further notes that bus operator decisions since the tendering exercise have resulted in further routes being withdrawn, notably...

1. The 10A service linking Oxton/Arrowe Park Hospital/Claughton Village (6th Form College) and New Brighton
2. The 83A from Birkenhead to West Kirby

Council considers that Wirral's bus network has undergone significant detrimental change since the review of services undertaken by Merseytravel in September 2017 and welcomes the current consultation being carried out by Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram, 'The Big Bus Debate'.

Council further considers that the proposal by the CCG to relocate Minor Injury and Walk-in health services at Arrowe Park Hospital fails to take account of the poor bus connections from many parts of Wirral.

Council considers that the privatisation of bus services has failed outside London and that the current model of bus provision on Merseyside, (the so called 'Bus Alliance'), is failing too many parts of the Wirral.

Council therefore calls on Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram to exercise powers devolved under the Bus Services Act 2017 and move towards a fully franchised bus network for LCR and Wirral.