

# Extraordinary Council – 25 February, 2019

## Motions – Celtic Manor Resort

### 1. CELTIC MANOR RESORT

**Proposed** by Councillor Chris Blakeley

**Seconded** by Councillor Gerry Ellis

Council notes that in excess of £1 million of Council taxpayers' money has, so far, been utilised to support this project, as well as Council Officers' and consultants' time, while Cabinet itself has stated that golf in Wirral is in decline.

Council also notes that the Celtic Manor Resort, formerly known as the Hoylake Golf Resort, is dependent on 160 higher-band houses and 40 apartments being built on a location within Wirral's precious Green Belt with further Council support suggested at up to £26 million.

Council recognises the widespread concern at this proposal, including the opposition voiced recently by Local Campaign Forum of the Labour Party.

Council is advised by the Director of Governance and Assurance that, under the Leader and Cabinet system (as operated by Labour in Wirral), it does not have the power to demand or force the Cabinet to drop this unwanted scheme in its entirety.

However, given the uncertainty, the massive public opposition, the financial risks to the taxpayer and the harm that would be caused to Wirral's Green Belt, Council strongly recommends that Cabinet listen to the people of Wirral and withdraws from this scheme in its entirety and notify all stakeholders of its intention not to proceed.

### 2. PUTTING WIRRAL'S NEEDS FIRST INSTEAD OF PIPE DREAMS

**Proposed** by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

**Seconded** by Councillor Allan Brame

Council remains concerned that this speculative development is still being put forward based on assumptions that no longer appear relevant at a time of economic uncertainty, growing concern about development in the Green Belt and greater recognition of the importance of ensuring future food supply in a period of climate change.

In this context, the National Planning Policy Framework states...  
*'Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified (para 136)',* albeit offering potential exceptions (para 145b) on a case by case basis.

Without prejudging these issues, Council recognises that the planning considerations covering the special circumstances of this case would take considerable time and

effort to justify and resolve. Council observes that the Hulton Park project in Bolton was called in by the Secretary of State after a lengthy period of preparation.

Council believes that it is no longer reasonable to put stretched managerial and officer capacity into this Golf Resort project. Wirral's key priority should be to bring together a Local Plan that protects agricultural land, makes a strong case against intrusions into the Green Belt and creates the conditions for urban regeneration and re-use of brownfield sites.

In this context, Council notes that the National Planning Policy Framework includes this guidance:

*'Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.'* (para 117)

*'Planning policies and decisions should ... give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;'* (para 118c)

Council notes that Cabinet, on 18 December 2017 (Minutes 72 and 76 refer), agreed to the use of prudential borrowing up to a maximum of £26 million subject to conditions, based on the contents of a study that has been exempted from publication.

Council now wishes to advise Cabinet that:

- i. it believes that the use of prudential borrowing would be better directed to dealing with the housing market failure identified in deprived parts of Wirral as part of a considered plan;
- ii. a programme of regeneration should be brought forward that would assist in the assembly and development of brownfield sites;
- iii. this programme should involve working with housing associations to provide key elements of affordable and social housing to meet Wirral's assessed needs.

### **3. CELTIC MANOR RESORT**

**Proposed** by Councillor Phil Davies

**Seconded** by Councillor Angela Davies

Council notes the concerns which have been expressed about the proposed Celtic Manor Resort in Hoylake.

Council also notes the potential financial and economic benefits of the proposed scheme: including 300 jobs, apprenticeship opportunities, up to £40 million in one-off payments and £1 million to the Council in increased revenue every year to be invested in public services.

Council notes the wider potential benefits of the scheme, including revitalising the Hoylake high-street and providing a huge boost to the visitor economy throughout the borough.

Council further notes the support which local businesses have expressed for the scheme.

Council believes it would be inappropriate to make a decision on this scheme before we have the full facts. We have only recently – within days – received the funding proposal from the developer, which is now under review.

Council further believes it is important to review the details of the various feasibility studies which will assess the environmental and economic impact of the scheme and believes residents should be consulted on these details as part of a robust planning application.

Council therefore agrees to ask for the relevant Scrutiny Committee to hold a special meeting to consider all aspects of the scheme once negotiations have reached a point where a clear proposition can be placed before Members.

The Scrutiny Committee will then be able to make informed representations to the Cabinet.