

COUNCIL

Monday, 25 February 2019

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Geoffrey Watt) in the Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Tony Smith)

Councillors	T Anderson	S Frost	B Mooney
	B Berry	A Gardner	C Muspratt
	J Bird	P Gilchrist	T Norbury
	C Blakeley	JE Green	C Povall
	A Brame	EA Grey	L Rennie
	P Brightmore	P Hayes	J Robinson
	D Burgess-Joyce	A Hodson	L Rowlands
	K Cannon	K Hodson	C Spriggs
	C Carubia	AER Jones	J Stapleton
	P Cleary	C Jones	P Stuart
	W Clements	S Jones	M Sullivan
	T Cottier	T Jones	A Sykes
	T Cox	M Jordan	T Usher
	A Davies	S Kelly	J Walsh
	G Davies	B Kenny	S Whittingham
	P Davies	A Leech	I Williams
	WJ Davies	I Lewis	KJ Williams
	P Doughty	C Meaden	S Williams
	D Elderton	M McLaughlin	J Williamson
	G Ellis	J McManus	
	S Foulkes	D Mitchell	

Apologies Councillors RL Abbey G Wood
P Hackett

91 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council were invited to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Name	Item No. and Nature of Declaration
Councillor Geoffrey Watt (Mayor)	Item No. 3 – Celtic Manor Resort (Minute No. 93 refers). Personal – by virtue of him being a Council appointed Trustee of West Kirby Charities which owns land in the area. Councillor Watt formally resigned with immediate effect as a Trustee to enable him to vote on this matter.

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Councillor Personal – by virtue of him being a Council appointed
David Elderton Trustee of West Kirby Charities which owns land in the
area. Councillor Elderton formally resigned with immediate
effect as a Trustee to enable him to vote on this matter.

Councillor Ian Lewis questioned whether if Members' had been in receipt of hospitality, would that be classed as a declarable interest. The Director of Governance and Assurance informed that if Members' had received direct expenses e.g. in the form of sponsorship that would need to be declared, however hospitality in the course of ordinary business would not.

92 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor noted that apologies had been received from Councillors Ron Abbey, Pat Hackett, Gill Wood and the Civic Mayor's Chaplain, Rev David Chester.

The Civic Mayor informed that as per the last meeting of Council the current Standing Order 18 referred to the '...normal method of voting at meetings of the Council shall be by show of hands...' and that the Council therefore needed to determine if they wished to use the electronic voting system.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor George Davies, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That the electronic voting system be used for all votes at this meeting.

The Civic Mayor then invited Councillor Chris Meaden to make a short personal statement.

Councillor Chris Meaden addressed the Council stating that after 28 years serving as a Labour Councillor, it was with great sadness that she had resigned the Labour Whip. She thanked her family for their support during this difficult period and also thanked Members across the Chamber for their kind words of support. She added that she would be putting herself forward for re-election in Rock Ferry Ward in May 2019, a Ward she had represented since becoming a Councillor.

93 **CELTIC MANOR RESORT**

The Civic Mayor introduced the item on the Celtic Manor Resort for which three motions had been submitted. He suggested that the Council debate all

three motions as one and on a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor George Davies, it was –

Resolved – That in accordance with Standing Order 12(2) all three motions be debated in one debate with separate votes on each.

Councillor Chris Blakeley moved and Councillor Gerry Ellis seconded the following Motion –

“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.”

Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Alan Brame seconded the following motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7 –

“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."

Councillor Phil Davies moved and Councillor Angela Davies seconded the following motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 7 –

“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.”

A debate ensued on the three motions before Council that included specific reference to the proposed development on the Green Belt, the need for affordable homes in Wirral and the expected economic benefits arising from the Celtic Manor Resort. Members debated matters relating to environmental, development and visitor economy aspects of the proposal, and further noted that planning approvals would be required in order for the proposal to progress.

During the course of debate Councillors Ian Lewis and Phil Davies paid tribute to Councillor Chris Meaden for her hard work as an Elected Member representing the New Ferry Ward and her efforts and selfless commitment to the Borough. Councillor Davies also expressed thanks to Councillor Gerry Ellis, whose experience and expertise serving on the Council would be sorely missed after the May Elections.

Following the debate and Councillors Chris Blakeley, Phil Gilchrist and Phil Davies having replied, the Civic Mayor then moved to the voting on each of the three motions.

Councillor Chris Blakeley moved, seconded by Councillor Ian Lewis, that electronic voting on the motions be suspended. On a show of hands the vote was then put and lost (30:33) (No abstentions).

Prior to the vote on the Conservative motion, a number of Members rose to request a 'card vote'. A recorded vote was then taken on the motion and the Council divided as follows:

For the motion (31) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, C Blakeley, A Brame, D Burgess-Joyce, C Carubia, P Cleary, W Clements, T Cox, D Elderton, G Ellis, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, JE Green, P Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, M Jordan, S Kelly, I Lewis, C Meaden, M McLaughlin, D Mitchell, C Povall, L Rennie, J Robinson, L Rowlands, M Sullivan, A Sykes, G Watt, S Williams.

Against the motion (32) – Councillors J Bird, P Brightmore, K Cannon, T Cottier, A Davies, G Davies, P Davies, WJ Davies, P Doughty, S Foulkes, S Frost, EA Grey, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, B Kenny, A Leech, J McManus, B Mooney, C Muspratt, T Norbury, T Smith, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, KJ Williams, J Williamson.

The Conservative motion was therefore lost (31:32) (No abstentions).

The Liberal Democrat Motion having been moved by Councillor Phil Gilchrist was then put and lost (30:33) (No abstentions).

Prior to the vote on the Labour motion, a number of Members rose to request a 'card vote'. A recorded vote was then taken on the motion and the Council divided as follows:

For the motion (32) – Councillors J Bird, P Brightmore, K Cannon, T Cottier, A Davies, G Davies, P Davies, WJ Davies, P Doughty, S Foulkes, S Frost, EA Grey, AER Jones, C Jones, S Jones, T Jones, B Kenny, A Leech, J McManus, B Mooney, C Muspratt, T Norbury, T Smith, C Spriggs, J Stapleton, P Stuart, T Usher, J Walsh, S Whittingham, I Williams, KJ Williams, J Williamson.

Against the motion (29) – Councillors T Anderson, B Berry, C Blakeley, A Brame, D Burgess-Joyce, C Carubia, P Cleary, W Clements, T Cox, D Elderton, G Ellis, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, JE Green, P Hayes, A Hodson, K Hodson, M Jordan, S Kelly, I Lewis, C Meaden, M McLaughlin, D Mitchell, C Povall, L Rennie, L Rowlands, M Sullivan, A Sykes, S Williams.

Two abstentions – Councillors J Robinson and G Watt (Civic Mayor)

Resolved (32:29) (Two abstentions) –

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.

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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.

94 **REVISION TO THE APPOINTMENTS AND CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEES 2018/19**

The Civic Mayor informed that notice had been given under Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 that three Councillors wished to be treated as a political group – Councillors Moira McLaughlin, Chris Meaden and Michael Sullivan.

The Civic Mayor informed that as such Recommendation 2 as listed within the report no longer applied, and that Council was requested to:

“Agree the revised constitution and membership of committees having regard to political balance requirements:

Committee	Places	Lab	Con	L/Dem	Green	Ind
Audit and Risk Management	9	5	3	1		
Employment and Appointments	8	5	2	1		
Licensing Act 2003	15	8	4	1		2
Licensing, Health & Safety and General Purposes	9	5	3	1		
Pensions	10	6	3	0	1	
Planning	13	7	4	1	1	
Standards & Constitutional Oversight	9	5	3	1		
Overview & Scrutiny: Business	15	8	5	1		1
Overview & Scrutiny: Environment	15	8	5	1		1
Overview & Scrutiny: Adult Care and Health	15	8	5	1		1
Overview & Scrutiny: Children and Families	15	8	5	1		1
Total	133	73	42	10	2	6

and

Agree that the names of appointees to Committees as required from the above considerations be provided to the Director of Governance and Assurance following the meeting.”

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor George Davies, it was –

Resolved (61:1) (One abstention) – That the above recommendations be approved.