

COUNCIL

Monday, 5 December 2022

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Jeff Green) in the
Chair
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Jerry Williams)

Councillors	T Anderson	A Gardner	D Mitchell
	S Bennett	P Gilchrist	S Mountney
	J Bird	H Gorman	Y Nolan
	M Booth	N Graham	C O'Hagan
	A Brame	K Greaney	A Onwuemene
	D Burgess-Joyce	EA Grey	O Osanlou
	H Cameron	J Grier	S Percy
	I Camphor	A Hodson	C Povall
	C Carubia	K Hodson	S Powell-Wilde
	P Cleary	J Johnson	L Rennie
	M Collins	C Jones	J Robinson
	H Collinson	T Jones	T Smith
	C Cooke	M Jordan	P Stuart
	T Cox	S Kelly	Jason Walsh
	A Davies	B Kenny	S Williams
	C Davies	D Kenny	J Williamson
	G Davies	J Laing	V Wilson
	T Elzeiny	I Lewis	G Wood
	L Fraser	J McManus	
	S Foulkes	P Martin	

<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	E Gleaves	Joe Walsh
		P Hayes	A Wright
		J Hoey	

57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Civic Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast. He then asked Members 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.

Councillors Chris Cooke, Steve Foulkes and Jerry Williams declared personal interests in respect of motion 3 'Wirral Needs More Train Services not Less' as members of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee.

58 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies had been received from Councillors Emily Gleaves, Paul Hayes, John Hoey, Joe Walsh and Alison Wright.

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that he had attended 46 events since the last Council meeting and explained that many events were the first at which people had attended since the pandemic. The Civic Mayor highlighted a number of key events he had attended, including Remembrance Sunday services, the awarding of an MBE to Kieran Gordon for services to careers and education and the long service awards for staff who had served for over 40 years. The Civic Mayor further expressed his thanks to members and officers who had bought tickets and sponsored tables for the afternoon Tea Dance event.

The Deputy Mayor then informed the Council of his recent visit to Peru, explaining the connection between Birkenhead and the Peruvian Navy and presented a letter from the Commander of the Peruvian Navy to the Civic Mayor.

The Civic Mayor invited Councillor Yvonne Nolan to speak on the international 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and the actions being taken within Wirral to support this including the launch of a local, co-produced Violence Against Women and Girls strategy.

59 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 October 2022 had been circulated to Members. On a motion by the Civic Mayor, seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson, it was –

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2022 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

60 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that three public questions had been received.

Brenda Ashton asked the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Liz Grey, a question in relation to road safety on Spital Road at the end of Vanderbyl Avenue, seeking a road safety inspection of the road concerned.

In response, Councillor Grey explained the limitations on the Council's ability to widen the footway on the south side of Spital Road but outlined the

previous traffic management measures which had been put in place by way of mitigation. She further advised that officers would investigate the location further to establish whether crossing facilities could be accommodated.

Jon Oborn asked the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Liz Grey, a question as to whether Merseyrail should be allowed to run a rail service that impacted on local residents' health and wellbeing, resulting from trains sounding their horns as they passed through Bromborough Rake Station following the adoption of a new timetable.

In response, Councillor Grey expressed her sympathy with the situation Mr Oborn was in but was pleased to hear that Merseyrail had been working with Mr Oborn and local residents which had resulted in a reduction of train horn usage for trains passing one and other. It was reported that officers at Merseyrail were still working to remind drivers to only sound their horn when there was a perceived hazard.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Kerry Rooney, which asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor Janette Williamson, whether the reduction in trains stopping at Bromborough Rake train station was reasonable for wheelchair dependent people.

In response, Councillor Janette Williamson outlined her disappointment that Bromborough Rake had seen a reduction in service, and as a result had made strong representations to Merseyrail via the Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham to have the decision looked at again as a matter of urgency.

61 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that notice of one public statement had been received from Kieran Murphy in relation to motion 3 – “Wirral Needs More Train Services not Less”. Kieran Murphy was in attendance and spoke in relation to disability access to Merseyrail’s service on the Chester line, and the impact of reducing the services from Bromborough Rake station given that it was the only station between Hooton and Bebington with wheelchair access. He called upon the Council to put pressure on Merseytravel to remove the franchise from Merseyrail for the impact on disabled access.

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that one petition had been received from Councillor Pat Cleary in relation to speed and weight restrictions for Price Street, Birkenhead. Councillor Cleary presented the petition with over 200 signatures, seeking the Council to acknowledge the regular excess speed of vehicles on Price Street, the high volume of large vehicles, the danger to residents and their calls for action.

Councillor Lesley Rennie presented a petition requesting additional measures to prevent flooding at Warren Drive, Wallasey.

Councillor Ian Lewis presented a petition requesting additional measures for improvements to road safety at Newport Avenue, Wallasey.

62 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that no questions by members had been received.

63 **REVIEW OF CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

The first matter requiring approval was the biennial review of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) which regulate the way in which the Council's contracts were procured.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Julie McManus, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That the changes to the Contract Procedure Rules be adopted as part of the Council's Constitution.

64 **WIRRAL YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-23**

The second matter requiring approval was the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2022-23 which was an annual plan submitted to the Youth Justice Board and linked to the terms and conditions of the Youth Justice Board grant award, which contributed to the funding of youth offending teams and services across England and Wales.

On a motion by Councillor Kathy Hodson, seconded by Councillor Helen Collinson, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That the Wirral Youth Justice Service Strategic Plan 2022-23 be approved.

65 **CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 2022/23**

The third matter requiring approval was the Capital Monitoring Quarter 2 2022/23, provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme 2022/23 at the end of September 2022 and sought approval of the revised 2022/24 Capital Programme of £98.7 million taking into account re-profiling, variations, additional funding requirements and grant variations identified since the Capital Programme was agreed on 28 February 2022.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That

(1) the revised Capital Programme of £98.7 million for 2022/23, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix D of the report be approved.

(2) the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 in the report be approved.

66 **CUMULATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

The fourth matter requiring approval was the Cumulative Impact Assessment Review, which provided consultation feedback on the cumulative impact assessment which is contained within the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy and recommended that a Cumulative Impact Assessment continued to be included within the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy.

On a motion by Councillor Andrew Hodson, seconded by Councillor Claire O'Hagan, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That a Cumulative Impact Assessment continue to be included within the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy.

67 **REVISED CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2022**

The fifth matter requiring approval was the Revised Code of Corporate Governance 2022, which sought the approval of the Council's revised Code of Corporate Governance following a review of the current version last reviewed in 2018.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Clare O'Hagan, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That the Revised Code of Corporate Governance and the framework detailed therein be adopted as part of the Council's Constitution.

68 **HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP**

The sixth matter requiring approval was the appointment of a member to the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

On a motion by Councillor Janette Williamson, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That Councillor Janette Williamson be appointed to represent the Council on the Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership.

69 DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Civic Mayor reported that in accordance with Part 4, Section 4, paragraph 6(a)(ii) of the Constitution, Council's attention was drawn to two decisions which had been taken and excluded from removal of delegation and reconsideration by Policy and Resources Committee.

The Civic Mayor introduced the minutes of the various Committees which had met from 19 September to 11 November 2022 and asked for questions to Committee Chairs on any of the minutes being received.

Councillor Sue Percy asked a question of Councillor Janette Williamson as Chair of Policy & Resources Committee, in respect of a re-profiling of capital funding in the High Street Fund for New Ferry, seeking assurances that the regeneration of New Ferry after the horrific explosion in 2017 would remain as a regeneration priority. Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee responded providing an update on the residential development plans in New Ferry with the Council working in partnership with Regenda Group on a comprehensive plan for the area to include affordable and energy efficient housing with a greater amount of family homes and environmental sustainability, with construction anticipated to start on the first site by late spring or early summer 2023.

Councillor George Davies asked a question of Councillor Liz Grey, in respect of minute 33 of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, seeking an update on the Hoylake Beach Management Plan. In response, Councillor Liz Grey updated that at the meeting on Wednesday, a realistic compromise of two options was agreed for a natural beach with improved access for all and some vegetation removal nearer to the RNLI station, which would undergo assessment before submission to Natural England and a full public consultation.

Councillor George Davies asked a question of Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, welcoming the opening of Eureka and seeking further information on when further regeneration activities would be completed. In response, Councillor Tony Jones also welcomed the opening of Eureka and the creation of jobs for the area, and provided an update on other schemes including the Millers Quay residential development which was now in development, the Hive office which

was almost two thirds let after only a year since completion, and further Public Realm work across Birkenhead waterfront getting underway.

Councillor James Laing asked a question of Councillor Stuart Kelly as Chair of Planning, in relation to the refusal of an application for smart parking in the Cherry Tree centre in Liscard following issues with incorrect fixed penalty notices for disabled residents, asking whether the applicant had appealed the decision. In response, Councillor Stuart Kelly confirmed that he had not received notification of an appeal, but that unsuccessful applicants had six months from the date of decision to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

Councillor Angie Davies asked a question of Councillor Janette Williamson as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board, asking whether she would wish to congratulate the previous Director of Public Health, Julie Webster on her retirement and her work to finalise the Public Health Annual Report, welcome Dave Bradburn as the new Director of Public Health, and thank the Public Health team for everything they do to keep Wirral safe. In response, Councillor Janette Williamson outlined her pleasure working with Julie Webster throughout her time at the Council, welcomed Dave Bradburn to the Council, and expressed how enormously valued the Public Health team were.

Councillor Julie McManus asked a question of Councillor Tony Jones as the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, seeking assurances that active travel was at the heart of the Council's regeneration programme. In response, Councillor Tony Jones outlined that there were numerous active travel schemes that were key to the delivery of the regeneration project, and outlined recent examples of funding to support the schemes including £2.25m funding awarded by Department of Transport to support movement schemes in Birkenhead, and that in the last two weeks, three consultations had been launched on active travel schemes.

Councillor Paul Martin asked a question of Councillor Liz Grey, in respect of minute item 33 of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, seeking an update on progress with the flood alleviation scheme. In response, Councillor Liz Grey outlined the excellent progress being made despite the complex engineering work required, and informed Council that the scheme was in-keeping with the environment in West Kirby and added to the public realm as well as protecting lives, property and businesses.

Councillor Tom Anderson asked a question of Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, asking whether he agreed that the £180m worth of investment showed the Conservative government's commitment to levelling up Birkenhead. In response, Councillor Tony Jones outlined that to drive the regeneration of Birkenhead forward, it was right and proper that sources of funding were accepted when available.

Councillor Daisy Kenny asked a question of Councillor Tony Jones, in respect of minute item 24 of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee, noting that the item relating to Dominick House was withdrawn, and seeking assurances that the future regeneration of the site would be of the highest quality and done in consultation with ward Councillors, local businesses and residents. In response, Councillor Tony Jones confirmed this was the case and expressed his gratitude to Liscard ward members for offering to ensure that the consultation process was done in its fullest manner.

70 **JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

Council discussed the matter of reports and minutes from the Combined Authority and other organisations being considered by the Council to enable members appointed to external organisations to answer questions on those matters. The Civic Mayor requested that the matter be looked at further by the Governance Working Group.

71 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

Five motions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.1, and were determined as detailed in minutes 72 to 76 below.

72 **MOTION - MANDATORY VOTER ID CHECKS COULD STOP PEOPLE VOTING**

Councillor Janette Williamson moved and Councillor Angie Davies seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

In moving the motion, Councillor Williamson confirmed that she was happy to accept the Green Group amendment, which was moved by Councillor Judith Grier and seconded by Councillor Harry Gorman and read as follows:

Insert after final paragraph:

‘If, despite the many arguments against, mandatory checks are introduced for the elections in May 2023 Council believes that the earliest possible implementation and timely delivery of any voter ID procedures will be essential to ensure as few residents as possible are disenfranchised. We therefore call on government to ensure that adequate funds are made available to local authorities to implement any changes.’

Following a debate, and Councillor Williamson having replied, the motion was put and it was –

Resolved (39:19) (1 abstention) – That

The Government are determined to push ahead with the implementation of mandatory Voter ID to 'combat voter fraud' despite little evidence of such fraud. In fact there were only 6 known cases of voter fraud in the last election (as admitted by the previous Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock MP).

A study commissioned by the Cabinet Office has shown that more than 2 million people lack the necessary ID to vote in elections. Council believes the Government have cynically and deliberately attempted to exclude young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds from the democratic process. This will mean that many Wirral residents will be unable to exercise their right to vote because of lack of appropriate ID.

Councils will have to issue Wirral voters with an electoral identity document, at an estimated cost nationally of £15m, and it is very unlikely this process will be ready until January 2023 with limited time to make residents aware of the new rules, cope with last minute applications or gauge demand. Most importantly, Council believes the Voter ID checks could stop people from voting, suppress turnout amongst disadvantaged groups and ultimately sway results with the real possibility of challenges in court. Council believes this is an unnecessary distraction and focus should be on addressing major concerns such as media bias, low turnout and not introducing a barrier preventing voters exercising their democratic right to vote.

Wirral Council has suffered 12 years of austerity and is facing huge budget challenges. This is a drain on time and resources and driven by a Conservative Government who Council believes are attempting to manipulate elections in a manner that demeans our democracy.

Wirral Council calls on the Government to delay the implementation of mandatory Voter ID checks at next year's local elections as there is still lack of clarity about the rules and a short timetable to establish the system which could leave hundreds of Wirral residents disenfranchised.

If, despite the many arguments against, mandatory checks are introduced for the elections in May 2023 Council believes that the earliest possible implementation and timely delivery of any voter ID procedures will be essential to ensure as few residents as possible are disenfranchised. We therefore call on government to ensure that adequate funds are made available to local authorities to implement any changes.

MOTION - PROTECTING THE SERVICES OUR RESIDENTS WANT

Councillor Tom Anderson moved and Councillor Jenny Johnson seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Stuart Kelly seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Paragraph 1 – insert after ‘...rely upon ‘:

‘but recognises that this has become more difficult in this period of high inflation, increased material costs and shortages, along with fluctuating energy prices.’

Paragraph 1 – insert at the start of the second sentence:

‘Council recognises that’

Paragraph 1 – insert at end of second sentence:

‘and supports the ongoing programme of reducing overheads and the number of buildings.’

Paragraph 3 - insert after ‘...is performing ‘:

‘so welcomes plans to secure a closer working relationship with its contractors to manage and target resources that are under pressure.’

Paragraph 5 – insert after ‘...income families..’:

‘due, in the main, to the valuations used in this unfair system which is overdue for overhaul or replacement. However, it is clear that final budgets and Council Tax levels can only be finalised in the full knowledge of the settlement expected to be announced by the Government on or around 19 December.’

Paragraph 6 – insert after ‘...can afford.’:

‘In so doing, Council recognises the very real constraints that have been made clear by Cllr Izzy Seccombe, the Leader of the Conservative Group on the Local Government Association, when she set out her honest assessment of the situation facing us all...
‘Without immediate additional funding, councils will face increasingly difficult decisions about which services to stop providing, meaning not just isolated closures of individual facilities but significant cuts to the services people rely on, including those to the most vulnerable. It is

important that we are honest with central government about these pressures'

(<https://conservativehome.com/2022/11/18/izzi-seccombe-local-government-is-ready-to-step-up-to-the-financial-challenge-by-championing-innovation-and-partnership-working/>)'

Councillor Janette Williamson moved and Councillor Liz Grey seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Delete second sentence of first paragraph and insert instead:

'However, Council recognises that in 2011, the Tory led council made 1100 staff redundant, and it has relied upon a diminished but committed workforce ever since, and we thank them for that.

Replace second paragraph with:

'Council notes that despite the Conservative Group not supporting the Wirral Plan Update, Council remains committed to working to achieve.'

Insert at end of third paragraph:

'Council also recognises that to protect and deliver these services at their current levels it needs adequate funding from a government that has inflicted 11 years of austerity on local councils which looks to resume following the impending public sector cuts of £35bn, who have lost 60p in every £1.

Insert at end of fourth paragraph:

'They expect the vulnerable to be cared for with high-quality social care, to be protected with vital and life-saving public health measures and to address the growing climate emergency which Full Council agreed in 2019.'

Delete after first word of fifth paragraph:

'welcomes the statement by the Leader of the Council reported in the local media that a "Council tax rise 'is not on the cards' in Wirral" and'

Insert at end of fifth paragraph:

'and deplores the recent Autumn Statement by Jeremy Hunt which seeks to balance the £55bn black hole in the economy, as reported in the media to have been caused by the Truss/Kwarteng 'mini-budget' off the backs of Council Tax payers and up to £35bn in public sector cuts.

Insert at end of sixth paragraph:

'Council also calls on all members to work together to deliver a legal and balanced budget protect the services that residents deserve, and to renew its request to Government, in writing with a letter signed by all Group Leaders to fund Wirral fairly to do so in the forthcoming settlement on or around December 19th.'

Following clarification from Councillor Phil Gilchrist on his amendment, the consent of Council was sought to amend the original amendment to include the word 'Council' in paragraph 6, to enable the amendment to make sense when moved in conjunction with the Labour Group amendment. This was agreed by Council.

Councillor Janette Williamson confirmed that she was happy to accept the Liberal Democrat Group amendment as part of the Labour Group amendment.

Following a debate, the amendment was put and agreed (39:19) (1 abstention).

The substantive motion, as amended, was then put and it was –

Resolved (40:18) – That

Council understands it exists to provide services which residents rely upon. but recognises that this has become more difficult in this period of high inflation, increased material costs and shortages, along with fluctuating energy prices.

However, Council recognises that in 2011, the Tory led council made 1100 staff redundant, and it has relied upon a diminished but committed workforce ever since, and we thank them for that and supports the ongoing programme of reducing overheads and the number of buildings.

Council notes that despite the Conservative Group not supporting the Wirral Plan Update, Council remains committed to working to achieve:

- **A sustainable environment**
- **Brighter futures for all our residents**
- **An inclusive economy**
- **Safe and vibrant communities**
- **Active and healthy lives for all our residents**

Council recognises that first impressions count; how the Borough looks fundamentally affects how our residents feel about where they live and how the Council is performing so welcomes plans to secure a closer

working relationship with its contractors to manage and target resources that are under pressure. Council also recognises that to protect and deliver these services at their current levels it needs adequate funding from a government that has inflicted 11 years of austerity on local councils which looks to resume following the impending public sector cuts of £35bn, who have lost 60p in every £1.

Council understands our residents expect the grass to be cut, and they expect the streets to be free from litter and potholes filled. They expect the vulnerable to be cared for with high-quality social care, to be protected with vital and life-saving public health measures and to address the growing climate emergency which Full Council agreed in 2019.

Council recognises that Council Tax rises impact disproportionately on the lowest income families due, in the main, to the valuations used in this unfair system which is overdue for overhaul or replacement. However, it is clear that final budgets and Council Tax levels can only be finalised in the full knowledge of the settlement expected to be announced by the Government on or around 19 December and Council deplores the recent Autumn Statement by Jeremy Hunt which seeks to balance the £55bn black hole in the economy as reported in the media to have been caused by the Truss/Kwarteng 'mini-budget' off the backs of Council Tax payers and up to £35bn in public sector cuts.

Council, therefore, calls on all Members to meet the challenge of providing decent Council Services, paid for at a price families can afford. In so doing, Council recognises the very real constraints that have been made clear by Cllr Izzy Seccombe, the Leader of the Conservative Group on the Local Government Association, when she set out her honest assessment of the situation facing us all: 'Without immediate additional funding, councils will face increasingly difficult decisions about which services to stop providing, meaning not just isolated closures of individual facilities but significant cuts to the services people rely on, including those to the most vulnerable. It is important that we are honest with central government about these pressures' ([https://conservativehome.com/2022/11/18/izzi-seccombe-local-government-is\[1\]ready-to-step-up-to-the-financial-challenge-by-championing-innovation-and\[1\]partnership-working](https://conservativehome.com/2022/11/18/izzi-seccombe-local-government-is[1]ready-to-step-up-to-the-financial-challenge-by-championing-innovation-and[1]partnership-working)). Council also calls on all members to work together to deliver a legal and balanced budget and to protect the services that residents deserve, and to renew its request to Government, in writing with a letter signed by all Group Leaders to fund Wirral fairly to do so in the forthcoming settlement on or around December 19th.

MOTION - WIRRAL NEEDS MORE TRAIN SERVICES NOT LESS

Councillor Jo Bird moved and Councillor Amanda Onwuemene seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

In moving the motion Councillor Jo Bird confirmed that she was happy to accept the Labour Group amendment, which was moved by Councillor Steve Foulkes and seconded by Councillor Sue Percy as follows:

Insert at end:

‘Furthermore Council supports the Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram in his Campaign to establish a “London Style Public Transport System “ across the Liverpool City Region.

Additionally, Council notes that there is a review meeting with Mersey Rail already arranged for the 8th December and Wirral Council calls for the outcome of that meeting to notified to Council straight away.

Council calls on Councillors on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee to continue to work together to ensure the best possible level of service for all Wirral Rail users and regrets the operational issues currently being experienced on the Chester Line.

Council notes that at the last meeting of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, public assurances were given to review the current situation in light of public comments and submissions from Ward Councillors and we should all work together to bring about improvements as soon as possible.’

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter, and it was –

Resolved (unanimously) (1 abstention) – That

In August 2022, Merseyrail took the unilateral decision to slash train services to Bromborough Rake and Green Lane stations from six per hour to two per hour. This decision was made without public consultation or any known disability or social impact assessment. Bromborough is the only accessible train station between Bebington and Hooton. Green Lane serves that part of Wirral with the lowest levels of car ownership.

Merseyrail, owned by Serco and Abellio, justify their decision by a 10% improvement in reliability for the remaining stations between Hamilton Square and Chester. The company could use the same rationale to reduce services to other stations as well. Trains to and from Chester

often wait for many minutes at Birkenhead Central station instead of picking up passengers at Green Lane and Bromborough Rake.

To date, over 500 people have signed a petition to restore the service. Merseyrail has so far dismissed their concerns.

Merseyrail says services will be restored when new trains, first commissioned in 2016, are in use across the network. The new trains are already many years late and there is no date for their roll out on the Wirral line.

In support of the Council's Wirral Plan, Local Plan, and net zero carbon targets, Wirral Council resolves to:

1. Work towards a clean, reliable, frequent, affordable train service to be proud of.
2. Publicly oppose Merseyrail's reduction in train services on the Wirral Line and calls on Merseyrail to fully restore train services immediately.
3. Urge the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor and Transport Committee to publicly oppose these and any future reductions in train services on the Wirral.

Furthermore Council supports the Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram in his Campaign to establish a "London Style Public Transport System" across the Liverpool City Region.

Additionally, Council notes that there is a review meeting with Mersey Rail already arranged for the 8th December and Wirral Council calls for the outcome of that meeting to notified to Council straight away.

Council calls on Councillors on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee to continue to work together to ensure the best possible level of service for all Wirral Rail users and regrets the operational issues currently being experienced on the Chester Line.

Council notes that at the last meeting of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, public assurances were given to review the current situation in light of public comments and submissions from Ward Councillors and we should all work together to bring about improvements as soon as possible.

75 **MOTION - PAYING MORE FOR LESS AFTER DAMAGING DECISIONS**

Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Chris Carubia seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter, and it was –

Resolved (39:19) (1 abstention) – That

Council believes that the Truss/Kwarteng ‘mini budget’ on 23 September 2022 has been hugely damaging to the national economy. Its lasting effect is widely acknowledged, and it will continue to hit the Wirral economy and residents for several years to come.

Council recognises that the impact of high inflation and higher mortgage rates will affect many Wirral residents who are already struggling to cope with high energy costs this winter.

Council notes that the measures introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his 17 November 2022 Autumn Statement rely heavily on an unfair Council Tax system.

Council deplores the decision to delay the introduction of vital reforms to Social Care which prolongs the uncertainty that has affected the long-term solutions put forward to provide the care needed for our ageing population.

Council believes that statutory services, such as Social Care, should be funded by central Government rather than through the unfair Council Tax system.

Council believes local, discretionary services should be funded by a reformed property tax that better reflects local land and property values.

Council condemns the Conservative Government for creating the chaotic economic conditions that are now pushing the Council Tax increase for Wirral residents towards the five per cent figure. All this during a period of high inflation.

Wirral’s people will once again be asked to pay out more for less services. This is an unacceptable solution to the financial pressures facing local services.

Council, therefore, calls on the Government to resume work on a fairer funding system for local Government that will help areas such as Wirral, which has such a high proportion of properties in lower tax bands, to support much-needed local services.

MOTION - FOOD IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Councillor Sue Percy moved and Councillor Paul Stuart seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate this matter, and it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That

The Chancellor says that education is a priority.

Food is an essential part of the school day. Teachers know that without food children cannot learn.

We all know that our school communities are struggling.

Parents are skipping meals to make sure children have enough. Schools are starting food banks. Teachers are paying for pupils' food out of their own pockets. Children are sharing their lunches with friends who do not have enough.

The Autumn Budget Statement which the Government has produced was an opportunity to do what is right and ensure every child gets a hot dinner at school every day but has no provision in it to extend free school meals for all primary school children. This is an investment in our country's economic future and this government is failing to help.

There's still time for the Government to do the right thing.

Over 130 civil society leaders (and counting) are calling for Free School Meals for All. Because a hot, nutritious school dinner is an essential for setting children up for success.

Teachers, doctors, nurses, nutritionists, chefs, faith leaders, charities, local authorities, and unions have pledged support.

Council urges all Councillors and local MP's to be brave and to stand with the families they represent and to be a voice for children's futures in local councils and in Westminster.

40 MPs have already signed the open letter calling on the Prime Minister to extend Free School Meals to every child in primary school.

When constituents write in numbers, Councillors and MPs listen.

The Government must step up and do its part.

Let us keep up the momentum. Together, we will secure a brighter future for our children.

Council requests that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan to demand fairer funding for the future of our children.