

Council – 20 March, 2023

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 13.1 and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 13.2.

1. LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson

Seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson

Council notes that the Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, a Government body, for examination and a date has now been set by the Planning Inspectorate for the 18th April 2023 to start the Local Plan hearings.

Council also notes that the Planning Committee's decision to refuse planning permission has been appealed by Leverhulme and is therefore dismayed and concerned that the Planning Inspectorate has made a decision to begin a public Inquiry on the Leverhulme appeals starting on the 16 May 2023 which will result in the Local Plan examination being paused.

This could potentially put at risk, all of the hard work to protect the greenbelt on Wirral and will cause unnecessary worry and distress to residents affected in Irby, Pensby, Barnston & Heswall.

The Leader of the Council seeks the support of members of the Council to write to the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate to urge them to delay the Leverhulme appeals, until such time as the Local Plan examination has been concluded. Council believes that such a step is necessary to reinforce the Council's commitment to protect Wirral's Greenbelt and its Local Plan.

2. SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITH THE COST OF LIVING

Proposed by Councillor Tom Anderson

Seconded by Councillor Kathy Hodson

Council welcomes the allocation of a further £6m for the Borough's Household Support Fund and the relaxation of some of the initial restrictions on how it can be used.

In total, this means that since the pandemic and the global rise in prices, Wirral Council will have received £15 million to support those households which are most exposed to rising costs for basic commodities and essentials.

Council thanks those staff and the voluntary, community and faith organisations that have delivered so much of this support and pledges to continue to work with them to ensure this latest tranche of funding reaches those most in need.

3. WIRRAL: A FAIR TAX COUNCIL

Proposed by Councillor Harry Gorman

Seconded by Councillor Judith Grier

Council notes:

- The pressure on organisations to pay the right amount of tax in the right place at the right time has never been stronger.
- Polling from the Institute for Business Ethics finds that “corporate tax avoidance” has, since 2013, been the clear number one concern of the British public when it comes to business conduct.
- Almost two-thirds (63%) of the public agree that the Government and local councils should consider a company’s ethics and how they pay their tax as well as value for money and quality of service provided, when undertaking procurement
- Around 17.5% of public contracts in the UK have been won by companies with links to tax havens.
- It has been conservatively estimated that losses from multinational profit-shifting (just one form of tax avoidance) could be costing the UK some £7bn per annum in lost corporation tax revenues.
- The Fair Tax Mark offers a means for business to demonstrate good tax conduct, and has been secured by organisations with a combined annual income of £50bn and more than 6,500 outlets and premises, including many social enterprises and co-operatives.

Council believes:

- Paying tax is often presented as a burden, but it shouldn’t be.
- Tax enables us to provide services from education, health and social care, to flood defence, road safety measures and the promotion of biodiversity. It also fosters social justice by redistributing wealth.
- As recipients of significant public funding, local authorities should take the lead in the promotion of exemplary tax conduct; be that by ensuring contractors are paying their proper share of tax, or by refusing to go along with offshore tax dodging when buying land and property.
- Where substantive stakes are held in private enterprises, then influence should be wielded to ensure that such businesses are exemplars of tax transparency and tax avoidance is shunned -e.g., no use of marketed schemes requiring disclosure under DOTAS regulations (Disclosure Of Tax Avoidance Schemes) or arrangements that might fall foul of the General Anti-Abuse Rule.
- More action is needed, however current law significantly restricts councils’ ability to either penalise poor tax conduct or reward good tax conduct, when buying goods or services.
- UK cities, counties and towns can and should stand up for responsible tax conduct - doing what they can within existing frameworks and pledging to

do more given the opportunity, as active supporters of international tax justice.

Council resolves to request that the Director of Finance investigates the following issues, with a report to be presented to a future meeting of Policy and Resources Committee:

- Approval of the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration;
- leading by example and demonstrating good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities;
- ensuring contractors implement IR35 robustly and pay a fair share of employment taxes;
- not using offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty;
- conducting due diligence to ensure that not-for-profit structures are not being used inappropriately as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates;
- demanding clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers and their consolidated profit & loss position;
- promoting Fair Tax Mark certification for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due;
- supporting Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses who say what they pay with pride; and
- supporting calls for urgent reform of UK law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies

References and links

[Introduction to the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration:](https://fairtaxmark.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Councils-for-Fair-Tax-Declaration.pdf)

<https://fairtaxmark.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Councils-for-Fair-Tax-Declaration.pdf>

<https://fairtaxmark.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Intro-to-CFFTD.pdf>

4. GREATER INSULATION PROGRAMME NEEDED FOR WIRRAL'S HOUSING

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by Councillor Orod Osanlou

Council notes that the creation of the '*Department for Energy Security and Net Zero*' was announced by the Prime Minister on 7 February 2023. The 'Priority Outcomes' set out at its launch included actions to:

'Improve the energy efficiency of UK homes, businesses and public sector buildings to meet the 15% demand reduction ambition.'

'Deliver current schemes to support energy consumers with their bills and develop options for long-term reform to improve how the electricity market works for families and businesses.'

Council recognises that this renamed Department replaced the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. This body had the key role in funding substantial programmes for home insulation schemes and projects throughout the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Council observes that Wirral residents have benefitted through the projects established to retrofit local homes considered by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority at its meetings of 21 January 2022 (Item 110, Housing Retrofit Funding) with the potential for further funding discussed on 20 January 2023 (Item 100, Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund). These relied on funds channelled through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and depended on bids submitted.

Council believes that it is essential that the energy efficiency of homes is improved in Wirral so that residents are able to live in well insulated properties, reduce their carbon footprint, meet their household bills and avoid being plunged into fuel poverty. In order to secure this, the creation and training of an appropriately skilled workforce is essential along with funding streams that are sufficient to enable sustained progress.

Accordingly, Council requests that the Director of Regeneration and Place provides a briefing paper on what is currently known about the energy efficiency of Wirral's housing stock with a view to supporting all future bids by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for funding to enable Wirral's housing stock to become more energy efficient. The briefing should be drawn up in cooperation with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and circulated to Wirral's MPs.

In order for the Council to respond to future initiatives in a timely matter the arrangements be made for relevant spokespersons of all groups, and the Director of Regeneration and Place to liaise with officers of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and its relevant Portfolio Holder to enable these to be progressed.

In the event that funds are released by central government that enable this Council to take them up directly the issue be discussed with the relevant spokespersons and reported to the relevant Policy and Service Committee and Policy and Resources committee as required.

5. REQUEST FOR FURTHER SUPPORT FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny
Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

This Wirral Council notes the recent survey published by "Together Through This Crisis" initiative. The research from the coalition of organisations including Save the Children, Shelter and 38 Degrees, [published](#) recently, found that 24% of people are regularly unable to pay for basics, while nearly 40% of people end the month with no money left.

Council is concerned that thousands of Wirral residents are struggling during the current Cost of Living Crisis.

Council believes that the reason why so many Wirral residents are struggling, is due to the last 13 years of Tory Government economic mismanagement.

Council believes that politics is all about choices, and that the Tory Government have consistently shown that they have made the wrong ones, so far as Wirral residents are concerned.

Council maintains that the cost-of-living crisis means families and children across Wirral are in desperate need of additional support from the Tory Government. Council believes that in the sixth richest Country in the world, including Wirral, children and adults should not be going hungry, and that the energy bill ticking time-bomb should be ended, as a matter of urgency.

Mindful that the Spring statement is forthcoming, the Chief Executive and Council Leader are requested to write to both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, calling for the government to take several steps to respond to the crisis, including introducing universal free school meals and unfreezing housing benefit, together with any other appropriate steps, to protect Wirral residents.

6. PARENTAL LEAVE FOR MEMBERS

Proposed by Councillor Daisy Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson

This Council believes that to ensure in so far as possible Members are able to take parental leave at the time of birth or adoption, that reasonable and appropriate arrangements are in place to provide cover during any period of leave taken.

Improved provision for new parents will contribute towards increasing the diversity of experience, age and background of local authority members. It will also assist with retaining experienced members and making public office more accessible to individuals who might otherwise feel excluded from it.

Therefore, this Council resolves that Constitution and Standards Committee be requested to explore the development of a Parental Leave Policy for Members and report back to Council with a recommendation by October.