

Council – 10 July 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. WIRRAL SUPPORTS FULL DEMOCRACY

Proposed by Councillor Angie Davies

Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

Following the 2022 Elections Act, voters must now show a document from a small list of photo identification for every general or parliamentary by-election across the UK, and for local elections in England.

The Electoral Commission recently published an interim analysis¹ into the roll out of Voter ID, that came into effect for England's local elections that happened in May of this year.

This analysis states that approximately 14,000 people were turned away from polling stations because they lacked the right ID to vote. [These elections excluded Scotland, Wales, London and Birmingham who did not have scheduled elections in May, so this figure is likely to increase]

In addition, the report said that a survey they ran reported that 4% of people who did not vote, specified it was because of the new voter ID requirements, Worryingly, this indicates that those denied a vote in future elections could be considerably higher and could run into the hundreds of thousands.

The study also warned of “concerning” signs that voters with disabilities, people who are not in employment and those from particular ethnic groups could be disproportionately affected by the policy.

In Wirral, just over half of the people turned away because they did not produce some valid ID, did not return to vote. This is not right in a democratic society. We want all our citizens to be easily able to exercise their democratic right to vote in all elections and not be excluded from having their say. No legitimate voter should be locked out democracy because of the Conservative government's disgraceful attempt at voter suppression and who are desperate to stop people from holding them to account by any means possible.

Council call upon the government to repeal Voter ID legislation in full and ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities to demand that this legislation is reversed to ensure that all Wirral citizens who are eligible to vote can fully participate in democracy.

¹ Source: <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-views-and-research/our-research/voter-id-may-2023-local-elections-england-interim-analysis>

2. HELPING WIRRAL RESIDENTS WITH INFLATIONARY PRESSURES

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council notes that the effects of worldwide inflationary pressures are putting additional strain on household budgets in the UK.

Council thanks those staff working with our vulnerable residents, along with the many voluntary, community and faith groups who are helping those most affected.

For those households which are eligible, the help that has been made available by the UK Government is a lifeline, including:

- Energy bills support scheme
- Pensioner Cost of Living Payment
- Disability Cost of Living Payment
- Household Support Fund

Council therefore requests that, to ensure more of our residents are able to access the support available, the relevant Chief Officer is requested to actively promote this support across all the Council's communication channels on a regular basis.

3. GILL NETTING IN WIRRAL

Proposed by Pat Cleary

Seconded by Judith Grier

Council notes the harmful effects of the use of gill nets upon fishing populations and other marine life, especially Porpoises and fish-eating birds such as Grebes and Divers.

Council acknowledges how nets are left unattended, suspended in the water over the tide and work by entangling fish by the gills as they try and reverse out of a net they cannot pass through. Because gill nets are non-selective they can catch and kill a wide variety of fish, including young fish, fish of protected species, and non-target species. Discarded bycatch is a common site on Wirral's beaches and has recently been commented on by visitors to Wirral's beaches.

Council notes how other authorities such as Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and Northumberland County Council have banned gill netting as part of a wider trend towards the phasing out of gill netting and supports the introduction of a bylaw in consultation with the Fisheries Authorities.

Furthermore, Council notes that permits currently issued by the Council to facilitate vehicular access enables equipment such as gill nets to be brought on to our beaches.

Council therefore requests that

1. The Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee writes to the Chief Executive Officer for North West Inshore Fisheries and to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that the matter be reviewed as a matter of urgency; and
2. The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee reviews council permits for vehicular access to Wirral's beaches with a view to specifically excluding the transport of gill nets and gill net trapped fish.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-65720586>

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/638507>

4. CALL FOR BANKING HUBS

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Allan Brame

Council recalls that in October 2022 a motion was considered proposed by Councillor Gilchrist and seconded by Councillor Mitchell, with the title 'Bank and cash services that meet local needs'.

Council supported this motion and, as a result, officers made enquiries of the Link organisation on how access to cash machines could be maintained.

Council recognises that the closure of bank branches has continued with the loss of the HSBC in Bromborough this July. The closure of Lloyds in Prenton is now planned to take place in October. The withdrawal of branches appears to be endless as branches are singled out for closure.

Council appreciates that Post Offices can offer services for depositing cash by arrangement with the banking sector and the Link organisation and that transactions can be made through on line banking and by telephone.

However, Council remains concerned that there is inadequate distribution of post office services to fulfil these functions. There remains a need for residents to obtain financial advice and have face to face discussions with representatives of the banks. Council believes that it is in the best interests of Wirral's people for 'banking hubs' to be developed in Wirral.

Council requests that the Director of Finance writes to the Link organisation and to the banking sector to secure their development.

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/g9596/Printed%20minutes%2010th-Oct-2022%2018.00%20Council.pdf?T=1>