

# Council – 4 December 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. MAXIMISING INCOME FROM BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES TO HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN WIRRAL**

**Proposed by Councillor Amanda Onwuemene**

**Seconded by Councillor Ruth Molyneux**

3.8 million people in the UK, including one million children experienced destitution in 2022. This is two and a half times the figure of destitute adults and children that there were in 2017. Moreover, a growing number of adults and children are living in deep poverty and are in danger of becoming destitute. They are struggling to meet their most basic needs for a warm dry home and to keep clean and fed. Three-quarters of destitute adults are in receipt of benefits which are not keeping up with the rise in inflation and rent increases.

Data is now beginning to show that poverty levels in East Wirral are starting to be replicated in parts of West Wirral. Poverty that this council is committed to reducing is rising across Wirral.

Deep poverty increasingly affects adults who are in employment but unable to meet the increasing costs of rent, food and bills. Poverty kills potential in children who are often too hungry, cold and tired to learn, sleep or play. In adults, poverty and debt have a negative effect on a person's mental health, their confidence and self-esteem.

Wirral Council currently works with numerous organisations to administer a range of benefits for residents. Council is keen that every effort is made to ensure that Wirral Residents are able to receive any potential unclaimed benefits and allowances in order to maximise income through working in collaboration with organisations for example Citizens Advice Bureau and Policy in Practice.

Nationally the total amount of unclaimed benefits and allowances has reached approximately £19 billion a year [1]. The figure for the Wirral is at least £91 million per year in unclaimed benefits and allowances across 160,000 families. Some examples of such are as follows:

- Universal Credit £29,829,512.00
- Carer's Allowance £14,011,024.00
- Pension Credit £11,596,125.00

- Council Tax Support £18,219,721.00 [2]

Other unclaimed benefit examples are: Council Tax, child support, broadband, water tariffs and free school meals.

Council therefore:

1. acknowledges that there is a significant amount of unclaimed support payments in Wirral;
2. asks that the Director of Finance in consultation with the Director of Public Health investigates what additional information relevant to unclaimed support is available through Wirral-based and national organisations in order to support our residents in income maximisation; and
3. requests that a proposal on how the Council can further support residents to maximise income be brought to members of the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2024.

1. <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/report-missing-out-19-billion-of-support-is-unclaimed-each-year/>

2. <https://wirral.greenparty.org.uk/unclaimed-benefits/>

## References

Policy in Practice; Wirral: Unclaimed benefits profile, Tuesday 19 September 2023, <https://wirral.greenparty.org.uk/unclaimed-benefits/>  
<https://policyinpractice.co.uk/>  
<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2022>

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## 2. JUSTICE FOR WIRRAL RESIDENTS

**Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson**  
**Seconded by Councillor Paul Martin**

Council welcomes the Covid19 Inquiry as an opportunity for bereaved families, experts, and NHS/key workers to tell their truths in an open and public domain.

Council is mortified by the evidence of advisors and senior civil servants at the heart of government during the pandemic who variously described Boris Johnson to the covid enquiry as presiding over a chaotic, feral, and incompetent administration.[1] An administration which played fast and loose with people's lives, rode roughshod over expert and academic advice, and poured billions of taxpayers' money into PPE contracts for their friends and donors. PPE which didn't work and much of which needed to be destroyed [2].

Council condemns the contempt shown by senior government figures, including the past PM Boris Johnson, and the current PM Rishi Sunak when they casually and regularly disregarded their own rules during lockdown. Partying whilst the

rest of the country did what was asked of them and missed funerals, bereavements, hugs and comfort.

Council condemns the statement by Boris Johnson – as reported by Special Advisor Dominic Cummings and confirmed by Edward Udney-Lister – Johnson’s Chief of Staff to ‘let the bodies pile high’[3]. Council condemns the view that Boris Johnson “was obsessed with older people accepting their fate and letting the young get on with life...”, as shown to the Covid Inquiry from Sir Patrick Vallance’s diaries [4].

Council is distressed that between 23 March 2020 and 20 October 2023 a total of 1,434 Wirral residents died of Covid, 326 in care homes[5]. Many of which might have been avoided with a responsible, compassionate, honest, and serious government. Instead, the most vulnerable were dismissed as collateral damage.

Council extends its wholehearted sympathy with all those families who have lost a loved one to Covid and hope they get closure of sorts from the Covid Inquiry. We also extend our eternal gratitude for our tireless NHS staff, key workers, and care home staff.

Council requests that all Group Leaders write to the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, and ask for an apology for the way Wirral residents have been treated by his government during Covid.

1. [The Covid Inquiry: ‘incompetence, backstabbing and misogyny’ \(sussexbylines.co.uk\)](https://sussexbylines.co.uk)

[‘Nastiness, arrogance and misogyny’ of No 10 exposed at Covid inquiry | Covid inquiry | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/10/nastiness-arrogance-misogyny-no-10-covid-inquiry)

2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-60176283>

3. [UK PM's former adviser confirms Johnson said "let the bodies pile high" | Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-pm-former-adviser-confirms-johnson-said-let-the-bodies-2023-11-10/)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/10/inside-boris-johnson-chaotic-no-10-this-week-at-covid-inquiry>

4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-67278517>

5. ONS weekly mortality statistics –Breakdown of all deaths and COVID-19 deaths by place of death  
<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/deaths?areaType=Itla&areaName=Wirral>

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### **3. PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

**Proposed by Councillor Jenny Johnson**  
**Seconded by Councillor Jeff Green**

Council notes Wirral has recently been allocated £1.4 million as part of the Government’s Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Council understands this funding forms part of an additional £34.6 million awarded recently to 70 councils around the country, and follows the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018, placing a duty on local councils to act.

Council further notes the £7.8 million of Government funding also allocated to Wirral for drug and alcohol treatment programmes and understands part of this funding will be used to extend the successful Wirral ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) programme.

Council welcomes this funding as a means to protect some of our most vulnerable residents and wishes to place on record its gratitude to those people who work tirelessly to combat homelessness and substance abuse in our Borough including the Housing and Homelessness Team, Merseyside Police, Wirral Ways to Recovery, the YMCA, The Ark and The Whitechapel Centre.

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#### **4. MERSEY TIDAL POWER**

**Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist  
Seconded by Councillor Allan Brame**

Council notes that a tidal scheme for generating power from the River Mersey is again being given serious consideration by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Council recognises the importance of securing long term and reliable energy supplies for our region and nation in order to tackle the issue of climate change and reduce Co2 emissions.

Council is aware that the Liverpool City Region has been making progress with this long standing aspiration, by signing an agreement with the South Korean water company to harness their expertise [1].

Council is anxious to secure more details on the project over and above those contained in this The Liverpool City Region 'Tidal Range' brochure [2].

In view of this Council requests that The Director of Regeneration and Place approaches the Liverpool City Region in order to obtain the following:

- technical information on the latest version of the scheme;
- an outline of the likely costs and sources of funding;
- the desired location and implications for shipping, our shoreline and risk of silting;
- potential effects on wildlife; and
- its expected contribution to energy supply and security.

Council requests that Officers be requested to arrange a presentation to all members at an early stage' with information obtained by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

1. <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/news/mersey-tidal-power-project-forges-close-links-with-worlds-largest-tidal-operator>
  2. [https://api.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MTP\\_Brochure\\_The\\_Proposition\\_8\\_Web.pdf](https://api.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/MTP_Brochure_The_Proposition_8_Web.pdf)
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