

Council – 4 December 2023

Amendments to Motions on Notice

The Council is requested to consider the following amendments submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3

1. **MAXIMISING INCOME FROM BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES TO HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN WIRRAL**

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Helen Reymond

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 **including the use of the [1]Low Income Family Tracker'. Council recognises that advice services have been provided by well developed arrangements through a number of organisations over the years.**

Nationally the total amount of unclaimed benefits and allowances has reached approximately £19 billion a year [2]. 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 notes that in September 2021, the Adult Social Care and Public Health (ASPH) Committee began a programme of work to provide a more accessible and comprehensive approach to benefits available to residents. Further progress was made by the ASC&PH Committee in November 22 (Minute 60 refers) and July 2023 (Minute 25 refers), with the aim of securing a new service. Council further notes that an officer decision notice is expected within this municipal year with the aim to secure an improved range of services to be in place by next April. The report to the ASC&PH Committee recognised that the work of the team and volunteers at ' Ask Us Wirral' had helped secure funds for our residents including £25.2million awarded to people through benefit claims.

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; **Within the investigation, the Director of Finance is requested to examine the technical appendix and methodology set out in the Policy and Practice report, in particular the sections on 'locally administered benefits' and Council Tax Support to establish whether the suggestions and calculations can offer any steps that Wirral Council and its partners can take to assist claimants 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. **incorporating proposals that the Council already has in progress through work ongoing with Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

¹ <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/low-income-family-tracker/>

² <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/report-missing-out-19-billion-of-support-is-unclaimed-each-year/>

2. JUSTICE FOR WIRRAL RESIDENTS

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green
Seconded by Councillor Leslie Rennie

Council notes the then Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, announced an independent public inquiry on a statutory basis with full powers, under the Inquiries Act of 2005, on 12th May 2021, he said it “would seek to scrutinise and learn lessons from all key aspects of the UK response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Council further notes that the Rt Hon Baroness Heather Hallett DBE was appointed as the Chair of the public inquiry on 15th December 2021. Baroness Hallett is a former Court of Appeal judge and has previously conducted a range of high-profile and complex inquests, inquiries and reviews, including acting as coroner for the inquests into the deaths of the 52 victims of the 7 July 2005 London bombings and as chair of the Iraq Fatalities Investigations.

The inquiry’s terms of reference, developed by Baroness Hallett and published in June 2022, set out a series of aims including:

- Examining the public health response to the pandemic;
- Examining the response to the pandemic by the health and care services
- Examining the economic response to the pandemic, including government interventions;

Council also notes that the Inquiry is yet to cover: the setting up of a Vaccination Task Force, the purchase, at risk, of vaccines and the tremendous vaccination rollout programme. Council further notes the incredible business and public support provided by the Government during the pandemic, including the world-beating Furlough Scheme, is still yet to be examined by the Inquiry.

Council recalls Wirral’s businesses received £99.44 million of direct grant support from HM Government, passported through Wirral Council, to support them through the COVID 19 crisis.

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 also commends the outstanding work, in response to the COVID 19 crisis, by the Council’s Senior Officers, all staff, Leader of the Council, Pat Hackett together with all Party Leaders, from the moment that British citizens were repatriated from Wuhan to Wirral in January 2020.

Council notes Pat Hackett stepped down from being a councillor and Leader of the Council in September 2020, and notes up to this point the officer and political leadership of the Council had been united in their non-partisan approach to the crisis.

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.

Council would welcome clarification from the proposer of this motion, and Leader of Wirral Council from September 2020, as to whether she has sought to inform the Public Inquiry and detail when she publicly dissented with the Government’s actions during the period of the pandemic and explain to the Inquiry how Wirral Council spent £107.20 million of Coronavirus (COVID-19) emergency funding allocated to the Council from HM Government.

Council notes this funding was provided to enable local councils to fulfil a critical role during the pandemic, including: containing outbreaks; protecting the most vulnerable residents; maintaining vital services; and testing and protecting the population from COVID-19.

Funding Source		Year	Department
----------------	--	------	------------

COVID-19 emergency un-ringfenced funding for LAs (Tranches 1-4)	2020/21	DLUHC
Additional 2021/22 un-ringfenced funding for LAs	2021/22	DLUHC
Test and Trace Service Support Grant	2020/21	DHSC
Contain Outbreak Management Fund	2020/21 and 2021/22	DHSC
Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund (including Extension)	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Workplace Capacity Fund	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Rapid Testing Fund	2020/21	DHSC
Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund (including Extension)	2021/22	DHSC
ASC Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund	2021/22	DHSC
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable Support Funding	2020/21	DLUHC
Community Champions Fund	2020/21	DLUHC/ DHSC
Compliance and Enforcement Grant	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund	2020/21 and 2021/22	HO
Welcome Back Fund (formerly Reopening High Streets Safely Fund)	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Provisional Rough Sleeping Emergency Funding	2020/21	DLUHC
Next Steps Accommodation Programme	2020/21	DLUHC
Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies	2020/21	DEFRA

Additional Home to School Transport Funding	2020/21 and 21/22	DfT
DWP Covid Winter Support Grant Scheme (including Easter Extension and Top-up)	2020/21 and 2021/22	DWP
Omicron Support Fund	2021/22	DHSC
Protect and Vaccinate Scheme	2021/22	DLUHC
National Leisure Recovery Fund	2020/21	DCMS (Sport England)
Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation Scheme	2020/21 and 2021/22	DLUHC
Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22	2021/22	DLUHC
Tax Income Guarantee Scheme 2021/22	2021/22	DLUHC
Total Coronavirus (COVID-19): emergency funding for Wirral Council in 2020 to 2021 and additional support in 2021 to 2022	£107.20 million	
Coronavirus business grant funding to Wirral businesses	£99.44 million	

Finally, Council asserts its belief that it is good practice to allow any Inquiry to hear all the evidence and publish its findings before jumping to conclusions and seeking to apportion blame.

3. PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

**Proposed by Councillor Paul Stuart
Seconded by Councillor Tony Jones**

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.~~

Council also notes:

Across Wirral, 3,142 households are due to re-mortgage their homes between now and May 2024. For those families coming off fixed term mortgages they will face an extra average monthly repayment of £220. This could lead to an increase in the number of households threatened with homelessness [1].

In Wirral 1,225 households are owed a prevention or relief duty with homeless relief duty owed to 218 households in December 2022, rising up to 784 in November 2023. A 260% increase [2].

The estimated number of deaths among homeless people has increased by 53.7% between 2013 and 2021 [3]

Since the Government promised to ban Section 21 notices in April 2019, 419 households in Wirral have been put at risk of homelessness after being issued with a no-fault eviction.[4]

That whilst the funding for drug and alcohol treatment programmes is welcome, it is insufficient and will not make up for cuts to services since 2010 due to central Government funding to Wirral Council falling by 24.9%;[5]

Nationally, funding for drug and alcohol treatment across England was cut by 16% between 2013 and 2017 following funding changes brought in by the Health and Social Care Act, leading to a 23% increase in overall drug use between 2013-2020, and drug-related deaths in England and Wales increasing by 87.1% between 2012 and 2021.[6]

Council 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.

[1]

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/articles/howincreas>

[esinhousingcostsimpacthouseholds/2023-01-09 &](https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/financial-stability-report/2023/july-2023)

<https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/financial-stability-report/2023/july-2023>

^[2] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness>

&

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNjNINDQ1ZjEtMDE5Zi00YjU2LTlhODUtNDQwNjA4YzRmNTA0IiwidCI6IjJmJmVIMGIwLWJkY2YtNDQ2MC1iOTgzLTE5MzczNWM3MTgzYiIsImMiOjh9>

[wNjA4YzRmNTA0IiwidCI6IjJmJmVIMGIwLWJkY2YtNDQ2MC1iOTgzLTE5MzczNWM3](https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNjNINDQ1ZjEtMDE5Zi00YjU2LTlhODUtNDQwNjA4YzRmNTA0IiwidCI6IjJmJmVIMGIwLWJkY2YtNDQ2MC1iOTgzLTE5MzczNWM3MTgzYiIsImMiOjh9)

[MTgzYiIsImMiOjh9](https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjojNjNINDQ1ZjEtMDE5Zi00YjU2LTlhODUtNDQwNjA4YzRmNTA0IiwidCI6IjJmJmVIMGIwLWJkY2YtNDQ2MC1iOTgzLTE5MzczNWM3MTgzYiIsImMiOjh9)

^[3] [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:te](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:text=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021%20was,extra%20deaths%20(Figure%201).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20on%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years)

[xt=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:text=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021%20was,extra%20deaths%20(Figure%201).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20on%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years)

[%20was,extra%20deaths%20\(Figure%201\).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20o](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:text=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021%20was,extra%20deaths%20(Figure%201).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20on%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years)

[n%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:text=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021%20was,extra%20deaths%20(Figure%201).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20on%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years)

[n%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsofhomelesspeopleinenglandandwales/2021registrations#:~:text=Numbers%20of%20homeless%20deaths&text=The%20estimate%20for%202021%20was,extra%20deaths%20(Figure%201).&text=Statistics%20are%20based%20on%20the,deaths%20occurred%20in%20previous%20years)

^[4] [https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-july-to-september-2023)

[statistics-july-to-september-2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mortgage-and-landlord-possession-statistics-july-to-september-2023)

^[5] <https://rehabsub.com/blog/the-impact-of-10-years-of-cuts-to-addiction-services/>

^[6] As 5 above.

3. PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird

Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary

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.

Council further recognises that, "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including housing", as stated in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Council therefore requests that Director of Regeneration brings a report to the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee within this municipal year providing information and making recommendations to address:

1. the needs of all people on the Wirral who are homeless, rough sleeping or in temporary accommodation;
 2. availability and planned construction of new council housing and socially rented homes on Wirral with secure tenures and affordable rents; and
 3. protections available to social housing stock from the right to buy and right to acquire schemes.
-

4. MERSEY TIDAL POWER

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Helen Cameron

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.

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

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.

Council notes that our membership contains valuable expertise in tidal energy, for example Councillor Graham Davies has worked in this field for 36 years, therefore in order to support the Director of Regeneration and Place, Council further directs the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee to establish a task and finish group, drawing on membership from across the Council and all political groups, to examine the potential benefits and risks of Mersey Tidal Power to Wirral and liaise with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.