

Public Document Pack

COUNCIL

Monday, 4 December 2023

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

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Councillors | A Ainsworth | N Graham | J McManus |
| | C Baldwin | JE Green | R Molyneux |
| | P Basnett | EA Grey | S Mountney |
| | G Bennett | J Grier | K Murphy |
| | S Bennett | A Hodson | T Murphy |
| | J Bird | K Hodson | A Onwuemene |
| | M Booth | P Jobson | R Pitt |
| | A Brame | G Jenkinson | S Powell-Wilde |
| | H Cameron | J Johnson | H Raymond |
| | C Carubia | M Jordan | L Rennie |
| | P Cleary | S Kelly | M Redfern |
| | C Cooke | B Kenny | M Skillicorn |
| | T Cox | J Stewart Laing | K Stuart |
| | A Davies | T Laing | P Stuart |
| | GJ Davies | E Lamb | M Sullivan |
| | G Davies | I Lewis | E Tomeny |
| | S Foulkes | L Luxon-Kewley | J Walsh |
| | A Gardner | P Martin | J Williamson |
| | P Gilchrist | C McDonald | V Wilson |
| | H Gorman | G McManus | |

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Janette Williamson declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in motion 1 'Maximising Income from Benefits and Allowances to Help Alleviate Poverty in Wirral' due to her employment with the Department for Work and Pensions. Councillor Williamson intimated she would leave the room during the deliberation of the item.

Councillor Ian Lewis declared a personal interest in motion 1 'Maximising Income from Benefits and Allowances to Help Alleviate Poverty in Wirral' as a trustee of the Number Seven social supermarket.

60 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor announced that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Brenda Hall, Tony Jones, Daisy Kenny, Cherry Povall, Jean Robinson and Gill Wood.

The Civic Mayor announced that he had undertaken almost 40 civic events since the previous Council meeting, which had included several remembrance events and visiting a war veteran on his 105th birthday. The Civic Mayor had also attended several Christmas light switch-ons, and thanked Council staff for accompanying him on the Liverpool Santa Dash to raise money for the Mayor's Charity.

61 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 9 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

62 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Mayor informed Council that four questions had been received.

Alan Featherstone asked a question to Councillor Tony Cox as Chair of Constitution and Standards Committee on behalf of The Big Flower Shop asking the Council to approve formal guidance giving public questioners the right to submit support documents for public questions and the right to ask a question on someone else's behalf if they have authority.

In response, Councillor Cox outlined that the Constitution requires a public question to be submitted 3 working days before a meeting and it was his view that if supporting documents were submitted within this timeframe, they would likely be accepted by the Chair and circulated to members. Councillor Cox also responded that the Constitution specifies that in the absence of a questioner, the Chair would read out the question, and that the Constitution and Standards Committee was content for this discretion afforded to Chairs to remain.

Alan Featherstone asked as a supplementary question whether the Council would consider providing answers to public questions 24 hours in advance. In response, Councillor Cox felt it could undermine the asking of questions in person, and that any question not answered on the night would be provided in writing.

Alan Featherstone asked a second question to Councillor Tony Cox as Chair of Constitution and Standards Committee on behalf of The Big Flower Shop asking who was responsible for the accuracy of responses to public questions.

In response, Councillor Cox outlined that whilst the Councillor responding would rely on information provided by officers, the Councillor responding to the question was ultimately responsible for the accuracy of the response. Councillor Cox referred Mr Featherstone to the complaints procedure if he felt that incorrect information had been provided in response to a public question.

Alan Featherstone asked as a supplementary question whether the response should name the officer who provided the information. In response, Councillor Cox reinforced that the accountable person was the elected member and again referred Mr Featherstone to the complaint procedure if there were particular issues he had.

Julian Priest asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council outlining issues with the MyWirral system closing cases immediately with seemingly no action being taken and no responses to emails, and sought assurances from the Leader that the system was managed and monitored.

In response, Councillor Stuart advised that the email account that sent notifications was a no reply account. Councillor Stuart also outlined that the automatic case closed messages had been discontinued and replaced with a requirement for officers to provide a detailed update on the case and if work could not be undertaken, providing a reason why.

Julian Priest asked a supplementary question outlining that he had not been given contact details for officers and therefore if no action is taken, how could a resident contact the person taking responsibility for the case. In response, Councillor Stuart undertook to determine from officers whether there was an escalation process and would provide a response in writing.

Jane Turner asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council detailing the impact of increased cost of living on residents in Wirral and provided the evidence of this collected by Citizens Advice Wirral. Jane asked whether Councillors would undertake to read the live dashboard provided and work together with the third sector to support those who were in critical need in the Borough.

In response, Councillor Stuart detailed the stark picture that the data painted and thanked Citizens Advice for the work they do. Councillor Stuart shared the concerns raised in the question and outlined the work ongoing at the Council including commissioning a new Information and Advice contract and that further updates on the progress to tackle the impact of increased cost of living were due at Health and Wellbeing Board later that week.

Jane Turner asked a supplementary question which outlined that St Helen's Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority had signed up to work with Policy in Practice and asked whether the Leader would consider working with those authorities. In response, Councillor Stuart undertook to discuss this with St Helen's and the Combined Authority.

Alan Featherstone made a statement in relation to agenda item 5(a) New Council Plan which welcomed the introduction of the Plan as a way to make a difference to the community. He called upon Councillors to ensure that the plan was delivered, particularly in the context of the impact on Birkenhead Market.

Greg McTigue made a statement on behalf of Birkenhead Market Tenants' Association in relation to agenda item 5(b) 2023/24 Capital Monitoring Q2, calling on the Council to fulfil its promise to establish a new flagship market in Birkenhead. It was outlined that there had been many delays and setbacks to the delivery of a new market and the Birkenhead Market Tenants' Association were disappointed with the current proposals.

Councillor Mark Skillicorn submitted a petition of 350 signatures regarding the closure of Boots Chemist in Greasby. Councillor Skillicorn outlined that almost 10,000 residents in Greasby needed this lifeline as it is the only Boots Pharmacy for several miles and many residents in the area depended on it, and called on the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to write to Boots.

Councillor Graham Davies submitted a petition of approximately 7,073 signatures regarding the closure of car parks in Heswall. Councillor Davies outlined that Heswall was designated a town of growth and redevelopment but taking its car parks away didn't fit with that, with residents and businesses overwhelmingly against any closures.

Councillor Julie McManus submitted a petition of over 700 signatures calling on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to not withdraw the 418 bus service. Councillor McManus outlined the previous reduction in frequency of the service and the impact on any reduction on those who need the service, including those visiting loved ones in Arrowe Park hospital.

Dave Pearson submitted a petition of over 7,000 signatures on behalf of Alan Jones, calling on the Council to reconsider the rollout of 20mph zones. Mr Pearson outlined concerns with the scheme including lack of evidence-based decision making, inefficient use of resources, diverting police resources and disruption on emergency service response time. Mr Pearson urged the Council to consider alternative solutions.

As the petition submitted in relation to 20mph zones had over 5,000 signatures, in accordance with Standing Order 11.2, the petition was debated for 15 minutes.

64 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Mayor reported that 8 questions by members had been submitted.

Councillor Pat Cleary asked a question to Councillor Jenny Johnson as Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee regarding the exercise being undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programme governance within the regeneration progress, and sought an update on when it would be reported back to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

In response, Councillor Johnson outlined that it was a substantial piece of work that was ongoing and the Committee would be updated on its findings upon completion, likely be early in 2024.

Councillor Jason Walsh asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council regarding the Councillor Portal regarding cases closed with no update and asked whether Councillor Stuart agreed that a review of the system was required.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that 4,454 cases had been responded to in a timely manner since 5th May, but shared the frustration of cases being closed inappropriately and outlined that officers had given assurances that these were being reported back to the responsible officers. Councillor Stuart also asked whether the Chair of the Member Support Steering Group would review these issues at its next meeting.

Councillor Ewan Tomeny asked a question to Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee asking whether the proposed move of Birkenhead the proposed move of Birkenhead Market to the Argos building, if approved, would be a permanent or a temporary move.

In the absence of Councillor Jones, Councillor Paul Stuart responded to say that he had met with the Birkenhead Market Traders Association the same day at the Argos site. He outlined that some traders didn't appreciate how large the Argos site was with several advising that they did not want to move to the House of Fraser site. Councillor Stuart gave assurances that the Council would fully engage market traders with the future plans via meaningful consultation. The Civic Mayor outlined that Councillor Jones would also provide a written response.

Councillor Ed Lamb asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee regarding road safety incidents at Broadway roundabout and sought an update on the progress of the programme of works needed urgently.

In response, Councillor Grey agreed that the work was needed urgently and outlined that the feasibility of design had been approved in March 2023 and the work would be included in the programme of work for 2024/25 which was due at the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in March 2024.

Councillor Amanda Onwuemene asked a question to Councillor Tony Jones as Chair of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee regarding whether the new proposed site for Birkenhead Market would include a multi-use entertainment facility and food hall and whether a report to members was required urgently.

The Civic Mayor outlined that in the absence of Councillor Jones, a written response would be provided.

Councillor Mike Redfern asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on the progress of the Committee's undertaking to increase allotment provision across the borough by 1000 plots by 2025.

In response, Councillor Grey outlined how ambitious the target was given an increase of 1,000 plots represented a 50% increase, and outlined the variety of additional plots that had been allocated up to a number of 184, with additional work ongoing to identify further sites.

Councillor Redfern asked a supplementary question on what the average wait time for an allotment site was. In response, Councillor Grey outlined that the average waiting time was under 4 years, with some plots having a waiting time of up to 9 years but others under a year.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council regarding the brownfield development as part of the progress of the Local Plan and what work was underway to get funding and deliver the brownfield first regeneration as quickly as possible.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that regeneration was a Council Plan priority and the brownfield first policy had cross party support and was a bedrock of the Local Plan. Councillor Stuart outlined that the Council had an excellent record of securing regeneration funding including the recent £10.78m of Levelling Up funding for Liscard and was confident the Council had the resources to deliver on its regeneration commitments.

Councillor Stuart Kelly asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council querying whether the Cleveland Street council depot had been identified as requiring relocation to Limekiln Lane in order to support housing development in the Cleveland Street area of potentially 1,000 homes and the unlocking of more on the peel estate beyond.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that there had been a strategic review of the future requirements of the 4 depot sites, with the Council owning three of the sites and leasing one, noting that the outcome of the review would be considered by the Corporate Property Board in February 2024 and then further with members.

Councillor Kelly asked a supplementary question outlining the need for the Cleveland Street depot to move if the area was to be redeveloped for housing and queried why there was not a definitive date for the move. In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that the site could not be relocated until the review had been undertaken and the site reallocated as part of the Local Plan.

65 **NEW COUNCIL PLAN**

The first matter for approval was to approve the new Council Plan as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That the new Council Plan be approved.

66 **2023-24 CAPITAL MONITORING QUARTER 2**

The second matter for approval was to approve the revised Capital Programme of £100 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of the report and the additional funding for the schemes referred to in section 3.7 of the report, as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That

(1) the revised Capital Programme of £100 million for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix C of the report be approved.

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

67 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024-25**

The third matter for approval was to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/25, as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, it was –

Resolved – That the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2024/25 be approved.

68 MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The fourth matter for approval was the appointment of persons to the Independent Remuneration Panel.

On a motion by Councillor Tony Cox, seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, it was –

Resolved – That the following persons be appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of 4 years:-

**Peter Bounds - Chair
Steven Griffiths
Tony Green
Helen Brennan**

69 SIX MONTH ATTENDANCE RULE S85 (1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The fifth matter for approval was to grant the absence of Councillor Daisy Kenny from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

It was moved by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Angie Davies, that the recommendation as detailed in the report be agreed, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Gill Wood. Councillor Stuart outlined that Councillor Wood was still recovering from an injury and would be unable to attend a meeting within 6 months of her previous meeting.

The motion was put to the vote and agreed unanimously. It was therefore –

Resolved – That the absence of Councillors Daisy Kenny and Gill Wood from all Council and Committee Meetings be authorised and approved for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year, pursuant to Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

70 DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Civic Mayor invited members to ask questions in relation to the minutes of Committee meetings held since the last Council meeting.

Councillor Mary Jordan asked a question to the Chair of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in relation to minute item 42 of

the meeting held on 19 October 2023, seeking support in promoting the Wirral Festival of Music in its 75th anniversary year and the year of Wirral being Borough of Culture.

In response, Councillor Cameron agreed that the festival should be promoted across Wirral and wider City Region, and outlined that members had previously requested that a review of the geographical spread of Borough of Culture events be undertaken to ensure it covered the whole of the Borough.

Councillor Graham Davies asked a question to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in relation to minute item 42 of the meeting held on 9 October 2023, asking whether she was aware of several clauses from the lease with Heswall Hall Community Trust regarding the closure of the car park. Councillor Grey undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor Kieran Murphy asked a question to the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee in relation to minute item 54 of the meeting held on 4 October 2023, asking whether he agreed that the regeneration of Birkenhead was essential for the success of the Local Plan and protection of the greenbelt.

In response, Councillor Stuart agreed that the regeneration of Birkenhead was key to delivering the Local Plan and protecting the greenbelt and committed to continue to speak up for the Borough and called on the Council to support the delivery of the Local Plan.

71 **JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

One question had been submitted by Councillor Angie Davies to Councillor Brian Kenny as Vice-Chair of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, in accordance with Standing Order 12.4.

Councillor Davies asked how well-equipped Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Authority were to ensure the communities of Merseyside are safe in light of the new Building Safety Act and the phase 1 inquiry report into the Grenfell Tower disaster.

In response, Councillor Kenny outlined that the majority of actions within the inquiry report had been delivered by the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority with those outstanding awaiting contributions from partners and were scheduled to be concluded by the end of the financial year. Councillor Kenny further detailed the work that had been undertaken including face to face visits to every high-rise property on Merseyside, with fire safety measures being implemented and enforcement notices issued where necessary.

The Mayor outlined that he had received notice of an urgent question under Standing Order 12.4(b) and considered the matter met the urgency test.

The question was from Councillor Naomi Graham to Councillor Steve Foulkes as Chair of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, seeking an update on the potential withdrawal of the 418 Bus Service, the alternatives officers were considering and confirmation that the Transport committee would support additional budget if necessary to ensure residents were not left without access to a bus service.

In response, Councillor Foulkes outlined that Arriva had taken the option to consult on the withdrawal of the service, but had since agreed to extend the consultation. He outlined that officers were discussing a number of options for the continuation of the service, with the preference being Arriva continuing to deliver the route, and that other options being considered were commercially sensitive. Councillor Foulkes outlined that the Transport Committee had unanimously resolved to retain the service.

72 **MOTION 1 - MAXIMISING INCOME FROM BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES TO HELP ALLEVIATE POVERTY IN WIRRAL**

Councillor Amanda Onwuemene moved and Councillor Ruth Molyneux seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13. In moving the motion, Councillor Onwuemene confirmed she was happy to accept the amendment moved by the Liberal Democrat group as follows:

Insert additional wording into paragraph 4 'including the use of the "Low Income Family Tracker'. Council recognises that advice services have been provided by well developed arrangements through a number of organisations over the years'.

Insert additional paragraph after paragraph 6,

'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'.

Insert additional wording at the end of section 2. After 'income maximisation' insert '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,'

Insert additional wording at the end of section 3. After 'March 2023' insert '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.'

Following a debate, and Councillor Onwuemene having replied, it was –

Resolved (58:0) (1 abstention) – That

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 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. 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.

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

Councillor Jeff Green moved and Councillor Lesley Rennie seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Insert 5 paragraphs before paragraph 1,

‘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’.

Insert two paragraphs after paragraph 7,

‘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’.

Insert 3 paragraphs and table after paragraph 8,

‘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 unringfenced funding for LAs (Tranches 1-4) | 2020/21 | DLUHC |
| Additional 2021/22 unringfenced 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 |

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| 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 |

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| 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.'

Council debated the motion and amendment and the guillotine was applied at 9.30pm. The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost (16:43) (1 abstention).

The original motion was therefore put to the vote, and it was –

Resolved (43:16) (1 abstention) – That

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.

74 MOTION 3 - PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS

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

In moving the motion, Councillor Johnson confirmed she was happy to accept the amendment proposed by the Green Group, as follows:

After paragraph 4, insert 2 final paragraphs,

‘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’

Councillor Paul Stuart moved and Councillor Angie Davies seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Remove wording in paragraph 4 'Council welcomes this funding as a means to protect some of our most vulnerable residents' and insert penultimate paragraph,

'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.

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.

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

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.

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%'

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'

Insert 'Council' before 'wishes to place on record' in paragraph 4 which now becomes the final paragraph.'

Having applied the guillotine in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Council did not debate the matter.

The amendment was put to the vote and was carried (43:16) (1 abstention).

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and was carried (59:0) (1 abstention). It was therefore –

Resolved – That

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 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.

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.¹

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.**

75 **MOTION 4 - MERSEY TIDAL POWER**

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

In moving the motion, Councillor Phil Gilchrist confirmed he was happy to accept the amendment proposed by the Conservative Group as follows:

After Paragraph 6 insert a final paragraph, '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.'

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

Resolved (58:0) (1 abstention) – That

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.

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