

# Council – 29 July 2024

## 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. WORKING WITH THE NEW LABOUR GOVERNMENT

**Proposed by Councillor Paul Stuart**  
**Seconded by Councillor Angie Davies**

Council congratulates the new Labour Government on their resounding and decisive victory in the recent general election.

This is an immense milestone for our nation and people clearly voted for 'Change'.

Council extends special congratulations to the four elected Members of Parliament who will serve Wirral going forward:

Dame Angela Eagle MP – Elected for the Wallasey constituency.  
Alison McGovern MP – Elected for the Birkenhead constituency.  
Matthew Patrick MP – Elected for the Wirral West constituency.  
Justin Madders MP – Elected for the Ellesmere Port & Bromborough constituency.

Their successful campaigns and subsequent election as Members of Parliament are a testament to the hard work, dedication, and the trust the constituents have placed in them and our new Labour government.

Council recognises and appreciates the commitment and efforts of Wirral candidates from all political parties who participated in a positive campaign, as well as their campaign teams.

It is also important that we recognise and thank all the council staff who worked so hard to make things run smoothly throughout the General Election process.

Council requests that the Leader write to all four MPs to give our heartfelt congratulations and confirm our commitment to working collaboratively with our MPs and the New Labour Government to improve the lives of Wirral residents, communities and businesses.

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### 2. PROTECTING WIRRAL'S PRECIOUS GREEN BELT

**Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green**  
**Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie**

Council thanks all those involved in the preparation, submission and appraisal of our long-delayed draft Local Plan, including:

- Council Officers, in planning, regeneration and housing
- Councillors, including former Councillor Anita Leech
- Campaigners, including Wirral Green Space Alliance
- The local media
- Inspectors Mike Worden BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI and Tom Bristow BA MSc MRTPI AssocRICS

Council recognises that with 5,691 on the waiting list for housing, it must be a priority for the Council to increase housing supply and affordability, but this must not be at the expense of the Borough's precious natural environment.

In his conference speech 2023, Sir Keir Starmer promised to 'bulldoze through' the restrictive planning system and to build 'the next generation of Labour new towns'.

Following Labour's landslide victory on July 4<sup>th</sup>, the newly appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State of Housing, Communities and Local Government, will be writing to local planning authorities instructing them to 'review' Green Belt boundaries with a view to releasing land for development.

Having undertaken the work required to reach this stage of the Local Plan process and to comply with the 2004 Act, Council does not believe that any land designated as Green Belt or Local Green Space in Wirral is appropriate for development.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Instruct the Chief Executive to respond accordingly to any correspondence received
- Reassure residents of the Council's commitment to the Green Belt
- Seek assurance from the Secretary of State that funds previously allocated for brownfield development remain unaffected by the change of Government
- Request that all Group Leaders write to Wirral's four MPs to invite support for retention of Wirral's Green Belt, regardless of any previous positions they may have taken, and to share their responses with all councillors.

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### **3. SOCIAL HOUSING GROWTH NEEDS AN END TO RIGHT-TO-BUY**

**Proposed by Councillor Judith Grier**  
**Seconded by Councillor Ruth Molyneux**

Council welcomes the new government's emphasis on affordable homes. Council believes the best way to ensure development meets genuine local need and reaches the highest standards in sustainability and liveability is to maximise the proportion of homes that are genuinely affordable socially owned homes. However, we recognise that the social housing stock continues to be reduced through so-called 'right to buy'.

Council is aware of the implications of a shortage of affordable and social housing options nationally meaning that households are remaining in Temporary Accommodation for longer periods while they wait for a more sustainable longer-term homes. At the time this motion was submitted, In Wirral there are currently 5,691 active applications for social housing. At the time of writing there were 188 total homeless cases with duty owed. It is evident from these figures that lack of social housing is a real issue. Reporting figures obtained from the councillor enquiry system demonstrate that there at least two housing enquiries per day from residents fed through councillors.

Council notes that new award winning sustainable council housing such as the Goldsmiths Street development in Norwich, a new development of around 100 homes completed in 2019, is already subject to right-to-buy applications.<sup>1</sup> Analysis from the Chartered Institute of Housing has found that 40 per cent of Right to Buy homes are now being let out privately. As a result, it's thought that £9bn is paid in housing benefit to private landlords in those properties.

Council further notes that there has been a distinct lack of investment in new social housing in Wirral and how since 2010, there has been a reduction of 63% to the new National Affordable Homes programme. <sup>2</sup>

Council therefore believes it's time to begin the phasing out of the right to buy so that homes can belong to their communities for ever.

Council also believes that any new homes should be built to the most energy efficient design standards possible, such as 'Passivhaus', referring to buildings created to rigorous energy efficient design standards so that they maintain an almost constant temperature. <sup>3</sup> This increases quality of life, reduces household bills and helps meet our net zero commitments.

Council also notes a substantive motion, 'Protecting Vulnerable People' was carried unanimously at [Council in December 2023](#). Council welcomes the report on homelessness that was brought to the relevant committee last March and we look forward to its two other decisions and subsequent action that remain outstanding on the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee with regards to:

- availability and planned construction of new council housing and socially rented homes on Wirral with secure tenures and affordable rents; and
- protections available to social housing stock from the right to buy and right to acquire schemes.

Council therefore requests that the Leader write to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities expressing:

- 1) this council's support for significant growth in the numbers of socially owned homes;
- 2) this council's support for any new homes to be built to Passivhaus or equivalent standards; and also to
- 3) call on the Government to commit to ending right-to-buy as soon as possible.

<sup>1</sup> <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/passivhaus-what-you-need-know/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50111981/Homelessness%20in%20Wirral%20and%20the%20use%20of%20Temporary%20Accommodation.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/passivhaus-what-you-need-know/>

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#### **4. AN END TO SEWAGE DISCHARGES INTO OUR WATERS**

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

Council recognises that forty years have passed since mounting public concern over water pollution led to creation of the Mersey Basin Campaign. The work of that body continued for a quarter of a century and secured conditions in which many fish returned to our river.

Council is concerned that this achievement has been and is being undermined by pollution from storm overflows. This had led to growing public frustration with the increased frequency of sewage entering our watercourses and ending up in our river.

Council notes that The Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) have now put forward proposals requiring United Utilities to address the situation with appropriate levels of investment. Whilst these are the subject of challenge and review it is essential that progress is made with the overflows which threaten the water quality along our shores.

Council looks forward to the outcome of meetings being held between the regulator and the Secretary of State, to seek a fair outcome for Wirral's residents rather than unreasonable levels of profit to remote and unaccountable shareholders.

Council therefore requests that the Director for Neighbourhoods writes to the CEO of United Utilities to request information and to seek assurances on their planned programme of works to ensure an end to their sewage leaks and that the findings be shared with all members of the Council.