

# COUNCIL

Monday, 18 March 2024

Present: The Civic Mayor (Councillor Jerry Williams) in the Chair  
Deputy Civic Mayor (Councillor Cherry Povall, JP)

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

## 88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to agenda item 7, and specifically Motion 4 (Immediate bilateral long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza), the following Members declared a personal interest by virtue of either themselves or a close family member being a member of or being in receipt of a pension from the Merseyside Pension Fund: -

Councillor Naomi Graham, Councillor Jo Bird

## 89 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Daisy Kenny, Paul Martin and Helen Cameron.

The Mayor announced that the Andy Day Memorial Cup, awarded to the backbench member of the Council, who had shown dedication and selflessness during the Municipal Year in memory of the late Councillor Andy Day, was to be awarded to Councillor Tony Murphy.

The Mayor then announced that the Andy Corkhill award, given to an individual, group, school or business that had done something demonstrably of benefit to the environment be presented to the Friends of Warwick Park.

The Mayor then advised Members that David Armstrong (Assistant Chief Executive) Dave Hughes (Director of Regeneration and Place) Graham Hodgkinson (Director of Adult Care and Health) and Simone White (Director of Children, Families and Education) would be leaving the Council in the upcoming months. He then invited Group Leaders to speak to this.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Stuart expressed his thanks to the Mayor for his work over the previous 12 months. Group Leaders, Councillor Jeff Green, Councillor Pat Cleary and Councillor Phil Gilchrist echoed this

## 90 **MINUTES**

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 4 December 2023 and 26 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.**

## 91 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Mayor outlined that three public questions had been received.

Rica Bird asked a question to the Leader of the Council regarding agenda item 7, motion 4, stating that she had been a Wirral resident since 1975 and a beneficiary of the Merseyside Local Government Pension Scheme. Rica Bird asked whether, considering the interest Wirral Council has as managing authority for Merseyside Pensions fund, if the Group Leaders would write to the Prime Minister asking for a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Leader responded to state the situation in Gaza was horrendous and agreed that there was an urgent need for an active, diplomatic process. He also stated that the terrorism of Hamas and the attacks on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 should be condemned. The Leader stated the need for an active diplomatic process and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Rica Brid asked a supplementary question, asking how Councillor Stuart defined genocide and how the leader defined people who were oppressed and the oppressor.

The Leader responded that genocide was clearly defined in international law and that people were able to understand the difference between the oppressed and oppressor.

Anne Litherland asked a question to the chair of the Pensions Committee, Councillor Julie McManus, regarding Merseyside Pension Fund and asking for an immediate, bi-lateral ceasefire in Gaza.

Councillor McManus stated she shared the concerns in regard to the situation in Gaza and the need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the need for long-lasting peace and humanitarian aid reaching Gaza. She stated that it is important that public bodies consider ethical and human rights concerns. Merseyside Pension fund has 149,140 Members of whom a very small number have posed the same question. It manages many investments and has a statutory fiduciary duty. The Merseyside Pension Fund has a revised responsible policy and a working party to consider investments. Additionally, an engagement framework has been developed to consider responsible investments.

Anne Litherland asked a supplementary question, asking if Members of the pension fund could be surveyed and informed of their investments in relation to the war in Gaza.

Councillor McManus responded to state that she would take advice to see if this was possible as there are 149, 140 members of Merseyside Pension Fund.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked if Councillor Paul Stuart could circulate his statement for all Members to read.

The Director of Law and Corporate Services read out a question on behalf of Keith Randles to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Elizabeth Grey. Mr Randal's referenced a visit made by Councillor Liz Grey on 4 October 2019, where beach maintenance was discussed, included the possibility of a large fine due to over-spraying and raking. Mr Randal's queried if the chair had acted on hearsay, rather than the reviewing of the Council's own records to verify if the allegations were true or not and if the abandonment of beach maintenance was necessary.

Councillor Liz Grey responded to state that, she had met a senior officer of Natural England and was informed that allegations had been made that the then beach maintenance programme had breached assent from Natural

England. The officer pointed out that permission to do something was not the same as instruction to do something and that knowledge regarding use of glyphosate had moved on since assent had previously been given. Raking ceased until advice was sought from Natural England, which was found to be consistent with the account given to Councillor Liz Grey.

#### 91.1 **Statements and Petitions**

The Mayor advised Members that there were 5 Statements to be read out.

Greg Dropkin read out a statement on Israeli attacks on hospitals and ambulances in Gaza, and on the role of Merseyside Pension Fund investments in companies which supply the weapons used against civilians in Gaza.

Piara Miah read out a statement thanking the people of South Africa, Ireland , Yemen and all the other countries who have been calling for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine. She asked Members to vote for an immediate bilateral ceasefire and an end to the occupation and ensure humanitarian aid reaches the people as a matter of urgency.

Jim McGinley read out a statement on the war in Palestine, noting the significant amount of humanitarian aid needed and asking for negotiations which recognised and addressed historic injustice which are a prerequisite to a durable peace and can only begin with a lasting cease-fire.

Islam Al Ashi read out a statement, summarising her own experiences visiting her family in Gaza in September 2023 and being unable to leave until December 2023 and asking for an immediate, bilateral ceasefire in Gaza.

Arthur Shaw read a statement giving the total figures of fatalities in Gaza, injuries, unaccompanied children, as well as the humanitarian impact (as of March 2024) and asking Members to support the Green Party Motion for a ceasefire.

#### 91.2 **Members' Questions**

Councillor Naomi Graham asked a question to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Elizabeth Grey querying if given the health and economic benefits of active travel as well as the benefits to other road users of Active Travel, could the Chair commit to sharing information of the benefits with all Directors and Councillors to help inform decision making.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey responded to state that she agreed that delivery of the Active Travel Strategy should start at pace with the document being shared with all officers and Members, noting that there is growing evidence that Active Travel increases health prospects and economic output.

Councillor Julie McManus asked a question to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Stuart Kelly referencing a petition submitted on behalf of 72 residents from Laird Street, Birkenhead. The question related to residents becoming increasingly concerned about the number of HMO's in the area, which changed the landscape of the area and could put additional pressures on services. Councillor McManus asked the Chair of the Planning Committee whether planning officers could work with housing services to review whether their existing controls in relating to location, concentration and internal layout of HMOs creates the most reasonable living conditions for the occupants of and the residents who live close to HMO's.

Councillor Stuart Kelly responded explaining that he was aware of the application and concerns raised within the Chamber regarding similar applications. He noted that planning and housing were intrinsically linked but they did require different considerations and described the different criteria. He stated that in 2018 a review had been undertaken of the standards required of HMOs, the emerging local plan has actions in place to reduce the number of HMOs, but this did not apply to HMOs which did not require planning permission but asked that this be reviewed and added to the work programme of the Planning Committee.

Councillor Gilchrist asked a question to Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee Councillor Elizabeth Grey, querying if, in view of the deteriorating condition of Eastham Rake between Glenburn Avenue and the area near to Plymyard Avenue could she advise whether this section of road was considered suitable for the removal of all the decayed tarmac, taking the road back down to concrete and adjusting the drains and manholes to the new levels? If so, could she advise the timescale for this work to be undertaken?

Councillor Elizabeth Grey responded to state that work was being undertaken with contractors to identify the most appropriate treatment for this and she would share the details with ward Members once these details were agreed. Work is scheduled for the next financial year.

92

#### **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024/25 AND 2025/26**

The first matter for approval was the Calendar of Meetings 2024/25 and 2025/26 which had been referred to Council by Constitution and Standards Committee on 28 January 2024. The report recommended amendments to the previously agreed dates for Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024/2025 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The report also recommended draft dates for the municipal year 2025/26 at Appendix 2.

The Chair of Constitution and Standards Committee, Councillor Tony Cox noted that a request had been made in consultation with the Chair of Shareholder Board that a meeting of the Shareholder Board be added on 4

July 2024. It had also been noted that the July 2024 and July 2025 Group Meetings had been removed in error for the published Committee Calendar but would be re-inserted into the final published versions.

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

**Resolved (unanimously) – That the Calendar of Meetings for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 municipal years be approved with the above additions.**

#### 92.1 ARMC ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The second matter for approval was the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report 2022/23 which had been referred to Council by Audit and Risk Management Committee on 15 January 2024. The Chief Internal Auditor had presented the Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual report for 2022-23, which was prepared by the respective Chairs of the Committee in consultation with internal audit and summarised work undertaken by the committee during the period in line with best professional practice.

On a motion by Councillor Jenny Johnson, duly seconded it was,

**Resolved (unanimously) - that the Annual Report for 2022-23 be approved.**

#### 93 **REPORTS AND DECISIONS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PARTNERSHIP ORGANISATIONS**

The Mayor drew Members attention to one Committee decision which had been taken and excluded from removal of delegation and reconsideration by Policy & Resources Committee and is reported to the Council in accordance with Part 4, Section 4, paragraph 6(a)(ii) of the Constitution.

[Utilisation of procure partnerships and Pagoba frameworks.](#)

The decision, Utilisation of Procure Partnerships and Pagabo frameworks was taken by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee on 22 January 2024

#### 94 **DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING**

Councillor Jeff Green asked a question of the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Stuart Kelly in relation to minute 60 of the Meeting held on 8 February 2024 noting that the Chair had expressed frustrations with the systems used by the authority to process planning applications, following

deferral of this item. Councillor Green asked if Councillor Kelly could update Council with his understanding of how these issues were being tackled.

Councillor Kelly responded to state that it was vital that planning officers had access to planning IT services that were fit for purpose, noting that it was frustrating that the planning IT system had thrown up issues of functionality which had led to delays. Following the meeting on 8 February, views were exchanged with the Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration and Place and head planner that there needs to be a step change in progress. High level communication between the council and programmer have taken place, including weekly project management meetings and with actions captured in weekly progress reports and further guidance delivered to planning staff in regards checking documents.

Councillor Jeff Green asked a question of Councillor Paul Stuart, Chair of Policy and Resources Committee on minute 105, of the held on 17 February 2024, regarding an extra £650k to prevent homelessness in the borough, noting that Council's and Housing associations cannot do this alone, with employers have a key role in supporting staff and preventing homelessness. The Homelessness Covenant was launched in 2010 and to date, 160 leading businesses have signed up. Councillor Green stated he had written to the Chief Executive, asking that the Council sign up to the Covenant and requested that Councillor Paul Stuart does the same.

Councillor Paul Stuart placed on record his thanks for the hard work undertaken by the Housing department, headed by Lisa Newman. Councillor Stuart was sure that the Council was fully supportive of the initiative and would speak with the Chief Executive to bring a paper to the Policy and Resources committee in the future.

Councillor Angela Davies asked a question to Councillor Janette Williamson, chair of the Adult, Social Care and Public Health Committee on minute item 60, of the Committee held on 23 January 2024, in relation to the Maternity and Neo-Natal quarterly report. The report provided an update and oversight of quality and safety of maternity services at Wirral University Teaching Hospital. Cllr Davies asked if Seacombe Birthing Centre was included within this report and requested a brief summary of the findings.

Councillor Janette Williamson responded to explain that the report was produced on the back of the Lucy Letby trial, noting that it was a very positive report. The Seacombe birthing centre was, despite initial concerns, going very well. The centre opened in 2019 and assists with an average 100 births a year, with the experiences of the mothers being stated as very positive.

Councillor Ian Lewis asked a question of Councillor Paul Stuart, Chair of Policy and Resources Committee on the committee minutes for the meeting held on 13 December 2023, to consider work on supporting the Masterplans

in the area, including New Brighton. Councillor Lewis asked if the leader agreed if the use of the promenade by West Wallasey Van Hire harmed the visitor economy and would he attend the next meeting with the officers, the Leader of Conservative group and ward Councillors to seek to have the vehicles removed.

Councillor Paul Stuart responded by stating that he had received many complaints and had met with the company owners to see what the issues were. The Council provided land to the company for vehicle storage and officers had sought to get the situation rectified as quickly as possible. The Leader stated that he would be more than happy to attend the meeting, alongside the other ward Councillors.

Councillor Andrew Hodson asked a question of the Chair of Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor Paul Stuart, relating to the meeting held on 4 December, 2024, minute 26 stating that the Brown Field First Policy had cross party support. Cllr Hodson asked could the Leader confirm if he had made representation to the Leader of the Labour party regarding his pledge to weaken his Green belt protection.

Councillor Paul Stuart responded to say that he was surprised that he has been asked this question, given his support of Brown Field First. But stated that he was more than happy to do this, noting that the Council was the first local authority to put Brown Field First on record.

Councillor Kathy Hodson asked a question of the Chair of Children, Young People and Education Committee, Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde in relation to the meeting of 1 February, minute 11. The minute related to early years funding expansion. The increase in take-up was welcome and asked that the chair confirm that representatives of early years providers were involved and engaged in the Council's funding.

Councillor Sue Powell- Wilde responded to state that this was the case.

Councillor Tony Murphy asked a question of the chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Elizabeth Grey in relation to the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023. Councillor Murphy asked a question, regarding allotment site expansion stating that he attended the Bebington Road Annual General Meeting, and queried the allotment strategy and if it was being refreshed.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey responded to say that allotments were an important part of the Climate Emergency response and supporting residents emotional and physical wellbeing. Members of the committee had long called for better allotment provision, noting that there is a statutory duty to provide allotments that meets demands.

Councillor Simon Mountney asked a question of the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor Paul Stuart in relation to minute 73, of the meeting held on 21 November 2023. Cllr Mountney asked that the Chair update Council on the need for a digital transformation partner and confirm that this expenditure would make it easier for people to contact the council either face to face or in person, noting the 33% increase in older people living in Wirral.

Councillor Stuart responded to state that, one of the biggest frustrations for residents is the lack of face to face or phone contact and that a fuller response would be provided regarding the digital transformation programme.

Councillor Stephen Bennett asked a question of the Chair of Adult Social Care and Adult Health Committee, Councillor Janette Williamson, in relation to the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023. Noting that the government had failed to invest in social care, and a deepening crisis in the sector due to the decision of the Government that families of immigrant workers are no longer allowed to work in the UK. Had a decision been made to continue to use the resources to continue the real living wage as agreed by Council in 2019.

Councillor Janette Williamson responded to state that the challenges faced had been a discussion that had been had by Committee Members, especially in regard to recruitment. Councillor Janette Williamson stated that the real living wage would be kept as a priority, noting the work undertaken by the Director of Adult Care and Health in recent years.

Councillor Mary Jordan asked a question of the Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, Councillor Elizabeth Grey in regard to minute 58 of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 and the increase of inconsiderate parking, such as pavement parking, double parking and parking on dropped curbs. The Council and Police both state that the responsibility lies with each other and queried would there need to be a fatality before this is properly dealt with. Councillor Jordan asked if this could be properly considered as part of the Parking Strategy.

Councillor Elizabeth Grey responded to state that parking issues were increasingly problematic and should be considered an important part of the parking strategy.

Councillor Louise Luxton-Kewley asked a question to the Chair of Childrens, Young people and Education Committee, Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde in regard to the meeting held on 29 November 2023, regarding corporate parenting, asking if the Chair could explain to Members what this meant.

Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde responded to state that, Corporate Parenting means having a strong corporate parenting ethos. Everyone from the Chief

Executive and beyond, having a passion about the children looked after, embedding strong governance and accountability, with clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and a whole system approach driven by the voices of young people.

Councillor Gary Bennett asked a question of the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee, Councillor Tony Jones in relation to minute 49 of the meeting held on 6 December 2023. Cllr Bennett asked could the chair please provide a written response and share with members from Moreton West, Saughall Massie and Leasowe and Moreton East, to confirm the current status of works and a timeline of works on the Wirral Growth Company site in Moreton including the development of a supermarket, re-developments to the library and inclusion of facilities to young people.

Councillor Tony Jones responded by confirming that a written response would be provided.

#### **94.1 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

Councillor Allan Brame asked a question of the Chair of the Liverpool City Region Transport Authority, Councillor Steve Foulkes regarding the Metro Mayors plans to build a new Woodchurch railway station noting that the playing fields in this area are now being used by the Glenavon JFC, Councillor Foulkes would agree to meet representatives of the club and ward members to discuss these concerns and how the station can be designed to accommodate the activities of this long-established football club.

Councillor Foulkes responded to state that the proposed station and design was at very early stages and that the Metro Mayor and officers would be happy to meet with stakeholders to engage along the process.

Councillor Allan Brame asked a supplementary question querying if given the location of the proposed station, it should be called Prenton station, rather than Woodchurch.

Councillor Steve Foulkes noted that the naming of stations was often the most controversial part of the process.

Councillor Julie McManus asked a question of the Chair of the Liverpool City Region Transport Authority, Councillor Steve Foulkes regarding a petition presented at Council on 4 December 2023 to Members of the Council and Liverpool City region Transport Committee regarding the 418 bus route which serves Bidston St James and Prenton and is known as the 'Hospital bus' locally. She noted that the bus route had been funded until April 2024 and sought an update on this.

Councillor Steve Foulkes confirmed that the amount of budget had been established for this route and would be reconsidered come budget setting.

Councillor Naomi Graham stated that she was pleased that this question has been asked and responded to as it covered multiple wards.

95 **MOTION 1 - HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND**

Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Chris Carubia seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13. In moving the motion, Councillor Gilchrist confirmed he was happy to accept the amendment moved by the Labour group, as a friendly amendment, as follows:

Insert additional paragraph after paragraph 3

*'Council regrets that the Government considers that the existing fund should only be extended for six months'.*

*Insert additional paragraph after paragraph 5 In view of this, the approach of the Local Government Association should be endorsed and supported, namely that the Government 'needs to use the next six months to agree a more sustainable successor to the Household Support Fund'.*

Insert additional recommendation as recommendation 1.

*the Leader contacts the Local Government Association with a view to establishing how following their approach will assist Wirral and the interests of communities with similar needs.*

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

Insert new paragraph after paragraph 5

*Council welcomes the additional £500 million announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Spring Budget to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England from April to September 2024, in order to continue providing targeted support to vulnerable households with the cost of essentials such as food and utilities and notes, to date, Wirral Council has received £15,246,725.46 in Household Support Fund payments to support our most vulnerable residents.*

The Council debated the motion and Conservative amendment which was then put to the vote and was lost (46:16) (1 Abstention).

The original Motion and Labour amendment was then put to the vote and it was –

**Resolved (62:1 ) (1 abstention) – that,**

**Council recognises the work undertaken, with all party support, to make the most effective use of The Household Support Fund in Wirral. Reports presented to members of the Health and Wellbeing Board set out the way in which the funding was made available to local groups and organisations.**

**The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) recognises the work undertaken in Wirral and how groups have been involved as part of its research. Council notes that continuation of the Household Support Fund was supported by a wide range of organisations including, the Local Government Association and the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA).**

**Council regrets that the Government considers that the existing fund should only be extended for six months. Council further notes the speculation and uncertainty over the future of the funding affects the organisations and all in our borough who are receiving support, help and advice.**

**Council notes the Chair of SIGOMA, Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton CBE has recently written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to explain the impact of ending the Household Support Fund that he described would have disastrous consequences. In view of this the approach of the Local Government Association should be endorsed and supported, namely that the Government ‘needs to use the next six months to agree a more sustainable successor to the Household Support Fund’.**

**Council believes that tackling the impact of poverty, through this scheme and its successors, is essential in order to deal with social isolation, family breakdown and childhood poverty.**

**Council therefore requests:**

- 1. the Leader contacts the Local Government Association with a view to establishing how following their approach will assist Wirral and the interests of communities with similar needs.**
- 2. the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to press for the Household Support Fund to be funded on a permanent basis to deal with the concerns expressed in recent months; and**
- 3. the Director of Public Health, in conjunction with the Director of Finance, to highlight future sources of funding to support Wirral**

**residents who are most in need by working through the relevant committees**

96 **MOTION 2 - FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH REQUEST FOR MR DAVID ARMSTRONG**

Councillor Angela Davies moved and Councillor Paul Stuart seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

The Council debated the motion and the guillotine was applied at 9:30pm. The Council voted as follow:

For the Motion (62) – Councillors A Ainsworth, C Baldwin, P Basnett ,G Bennett, S Bennett, J Bird, M Booth, A Brame, C Carubia, P Cleary, C Cooke, T Cox, A Davies, GJ Davies, G Davies, S Foulkes, A Gardner, P Gilchrist, H Gorman, N Graham, JE Green, EA Grey, J Grier, B Hall, A Hodson, K Hodson, P Jobson, G Jenkinson, J Johnson, T Jones, M Jordan, S Kelly, B Kenny, J Stewart Laing, T Laing, E Lamb, I Lewis, L Luxon-Kewley, C McDonald, G McManus, J McManus, R Molyneux, S Mountney, K Murphy, T Murphy, A Onwuemene, R Pitt, C Povall, S Powell-Wilde, H Raymond, L Rennie, M Redfern, J Robinson, M Skillicorn, K Stuart, P Stuart, M Sullivan, E Tomeny, J Walsh, J Williamson, V Wilson, G Wood

Against the motion – none

Abstentions – (1)– J Williams.

It was therefore resolved that –

**Council acknowledges and honours individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to Wirral and our communities. David Armstrong, the Council's Deputy Chief Executive is one such person. With a career that began in 1975 as a teacher, David epitomises the qualities of a dedicated and diligent public servant, consistently placing people at the forefront of his work.**

**Having been part of Wirral Council since 1990, David has fulfilled various roles over the 34 years, including serving twice as Acting Chief Executive. He has exhibited a willingness to go above and beyond, leading by example during challenging times and actively supporting the council, its staff, residents, local businesses and community groups. David's contributions include mentoring staff, recognising exceptional efforts, and providing personal assistance during emergencies, as well as guiding community groups through change and resolving complex issues. Council expresses our deep appreciation to David for his**

dedication and commitment to Wirral and the people of Wirral and wishes him well for his well- earned retirement.

**Council therefore requests:**

**That Council agrees to recommend that consideration be given at the next Regulatory and General Purposes Committee to a freedom of the borough request for Mr David Armstrong.**

97 **MOTION 3 - REOPEN OUR POST OFFICES**

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

Councillor Brian Kenny moved and Councillor Ann Ainsworth seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

Insert additional paragraphs after paragraph 2,

*‘During the peak of the Post Office scandal between 2010 and 2012, Sir Ed Davey, the Postal Affairs Minister, declined to engage with postmaster Alan Bates, the leader of the justice campaign. Council recognises that the 2010 Coalition government and the subsequent Conservative administrations neglected to address the scandal. Councils condemns the Post Office for deceiving government Ministers over time and for failing the numerous sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses nationwide, including those in Wirral, who were unjustly prosecuted’. Insert additional recommendation after final paragraph 7, Council further requests that the Leader to write to the Cabinet Office requesting the Elizabeth Emblem be considered for individuals who were wrongly convicted but have since passed away without receiving justice.’*

The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost (26:36) (1 abstention).

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

**Resolved – resolved (62:0) (1 abstention) that -**

**Council recognises the immense distress, anguish and grievance caused by the Horizon scandal for Post Masters and Post Mistresses, their families, staff and the wider community. Council believes the stress upon post office employees since the introduction of the Horizon IT system will have contributed to many choosing to leave their roles, accounting for some of the 7,462 branches which closed between 1997 and 2010. Council notes that since 2010, and in return for its government**

funding, the Post Office has been required to invest in the network, and maintain around 11,500 branches with no further substantive reductions.

Council therefore expresses its grave concern that post offices in Wirral, including Ford Road (Upton), Saughall Bridge (Moreton) and Grove Road (Wallasey), have been closed, causing hardship and difficulties to residents and local businesses. Council thanks those who are campaigning for these branches to reopen, including 1,035 residents who have signed a petition for Grove Road Post Office to reopen and the Upton Village Community Group who have written directly to the Post Office. Council requests the Chief Executive to write expressing these concerns to the Chief Executive and Chairman of the Post Office, and that all Group Leaders similarly write to the Postal Affairs Minister.

Council also notes the request by the Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee for the Authority to also consider whether any of the recommendations following the independent Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry can also be applied to processes within the Council, including those from Phase Five of the Inquiry starting in April, regarding internal and external audit, technical competence, stakeholder engagement, oversight and whistleblowing.

98 **MOTION 4 - IMMEDIATE, BILATERAL, LONG LASTING CEASEFIRE IN GAZA**

Councillor Jo Bird moved and Councillor Pat Cleary seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.

Councillor Allan Brame moved and Councillor Phil Gilchrist seconded part two of the amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3 with Councillor Bird confirmed she was happy to accept the amendment moved by the Liberal Democratic group as follows,

2. the Director of Pensions at Merseyside Pension Fund submit an *initial* report to Members of the Pensions Committee *for their consideration* as soon as practically possible to *outline the feasibility and potential impact of disinvestment by:*

- *providing* details of current investments in companies in the fund and confirmation on whether or not there are any direct links to Israel Defence Force's military campaign in Gaza as per information as sourced in this motion under point 3;
- *outlining* the engagement history by the fund or its partners with these companies; and

- **clarifying** ~~explain~~ how the fund's Responsible Investment Policy should be applied to these companies ~~with a view to potential divestment.~~

For the Motion (20) –J Bird, A Brame, C Carubia, P Cleary, C Cooke, P Gilchrist, H Gorman, N Graham, J Grier, G Jenkinson, S Kelly, E Lamb C McDonald, R Molyneux, K Murphy, A Onwuemene, H Raymond, M Redfern, E Tomeny, J Walsh,

Against the motion (42) Councillors A Ainsworth, C Baldwin, P Basnett ,G Bennett, S Bennett, M Booth, T Cox, A Davies, GJ Davies, G Davies, S Foulkes, A Gardner, JE Green, EA Grey, B Hall, A Hodson, K Hodson, P Jobson, J Johnson, T Jones, M Jordan, B Kenny, J Stewart Laing, T Laing, I Lewis, L Luxon-Kewley, G McManus, J McManus, S Mountney, T Murphy, R Pitt, C Povall, S Powell-Wilde,L Rennie, J Robinson, M Skillicorn, K Stuart, P Stuart, M Sullivan, J Williamson, V Wilson, G Wood

Abstentions – (1) – J Williams.

**It was therefore resolved that – the motion was lost.**