

Council – 18 July 2011

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 8(1) and are listed in the order received. The actual order in which they are debated will be determined by the party groups in accordance with Standing Order 5(3).

(1) CONSULTATION

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

This Council:

- (1) Reaffirms its commitment to enhanced community engagement to ensure that major policy decisions include more robust processes of public consultation, as appropriate, before decisions are taken, as agreed unanimously by Notice of Motion at Council on 15 February 2010.
- (2) Believes that last year's Wirral's Future consultation, using the task force model and public questionnaire, followed the principles set out in that Notice of Motion to:
 - Share the problem or issue and develop broad support on the need for change before progressing on to possible solutions;
 - Develop a 'green paper' approach to setting out options and possible solutions within the operational, policy and financial constraints with genuine opportunity for people to influence decision making, and;
 - Improve the use of the Council's website as a consultation portal, with a list of active consultations in progress and with the relevant supporting documents available as downloads.
- (3) Acknowledges the need for consultation to include a strong independent element and recognises the crucial work of the independent task forces - comprised of experts in their thematic fields - and thanks them again for their work.
- (4) Also believes that this approach played a substantial and legitimate role in achieving a balanced Budget for 2011/12 whilst protecting services, cutting the cost of running the Council and ensuring no compulsory redundancies.
- (5) Calls on the Leader to set out detailed plans, timetables and targets for how this year's Budget consultation will be conducted.

(2) CRUISE TURNAROUND REVIEW

Proposed by Councillor Ann Bridson

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

- (1) This Council welcomes the Government's decision to review the case for cruises to start and end at Liverpool's Pier Head and re-iterates its support for the campaign calling for the licence to be granted for cruise turnarounds.
- (2) Council requests the chief executive, and other officers as appropriate, to continue to lobby the case for a Pier Head turnaround, highlighting the economic benefit to the entire city region area.

(3) SHALE GAS FRACKING

Proposed by Councillor Mark Johnston

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council notes with concern that:

- (1) Mining company Cuadrillo Resources is undertaking test drilling for shale gas deposits near Blackpool in Lancashire. They are using a technique called hydraulic fracturing; an American technology known as 'fracking', controversial because it involves drilling dozens of wells over a relatively small area and pumping hazardous chemicals underground at high pressures to fracture the rock and release the gas. Drilling was recently suspended following earthquakes on the Fylde coast.
- (2) IGas Energy has licenses, over more than 700km² between Manchester and the Mersey / Dee estuaries, to extract gas from onshore underground coal seams covering land from West Manchester to North Wales, including locations in Liverpool and Wirral. The company has estimated that 1.95 trillion cubic feet of shale gas may lie trapped under Wirral alone. A new licence round is planned by DECC this year.
- (3) IGas has announced a framework agreement with Peel Environmental Ltd that gives access to coal bed methane production sites within Peel's land holdings in the North West. As part of this agreement, Peel will give unlimited access to their entire land holdings in the North West of England for the purpose of identifying those sites suitable for IGas operations.
- (4) In May, amid environmental concerns, the French Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of a motion to ban hydraulic fracturing.
- (5) There is a lack of understanding and evidence in relation to the environmental impact and safety of shale gas 'fracking'. There is also uncertainty concerning the adequacy of regulatory powers and oversight.

(6) The Co-operative commissioned study from the University of Manchester's Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 'Shale gas: a provisional assessment of climate change and environmental impacts' reported a number of conclusions in relation to the extraction and use of shale gas, including:

- A significant risk of ground and surface water contamination by the hazardous chemicals involved in extraction.
- The requirement for high volumes of water in shale gas extraction could put considerable pressure on local water supplies.
- The likelihood that close proximity of extraction sites to population centres would create additional pressure on scarce land-use resources through increased risk of intrusive noise pollution, truck movements and land use demands that could arise.
- The likelihood that exploitation of this additional fossil fuel resource will increase net carbon emissions.
- The risk that exploitation of shale gas will delay major investments in zero- and very low-carbon technologies.

Therefore, Council:

- (a) States its opposition to any application by IGas or other companies to carry out shale gas or coal gas methane testing or extraction in Wirral until such time as the Council is satisfied as to the safety of the process and that the risk of adverse environmental impacts have been fully addressed.
- (b) Requests the appropriate chief officer prepare a report for the Planning Committee, the Economy and Regeneration and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees to aid members in better understanding the council's responsibility and regulatory role in relation to gas exploration.
- (c) Further requests the Economy and Regeneration OSC to include a study of the potential economic impacts of shale gas exploration and exploitation in Wirral in its workplan, including whether the impact of a proliferation of shale gas drilling on the Liverpool City Region will adversely impact on it becoming a leading area for the manufacture of low carbon technologies and development of a green economy.

(4) 20 MPH ZONES

Proposed by Councillor Tom Harney

Seconded by Councillor Bob Wilkins

Council:

- (1) Notes its ongoing policy and strong commitment to road safety in Wirral through the introduction of 20 mph zones on all non-major roads in residential areas and in the vicinity of schools, funded as part of a four year programme in both the 2010/11 and 2011/12 Council Budget.

- (2) Notes that a similar commitment is being shown to road safety in other local authority areas, such as Liverpool, Warrington and Portsmouth, to reduce the number and severity of accidents by increasing the number of residential roads with a 20 mph speed limit.
- (3) Values the positive improvement in road safety and reduction in the frequency and numbers of people killed and seriously injured on Wirral's roads that reducing the speed limits in residential areas brings.
- (4) Welcomes recent changes announced by Norman Baker MP to Department for Transport rules making it easier for councils to introduce changes to 20 mph speed limits.
- (5) Is concerned that, to date, none of the £1.1m available for this four year policy option in Wirral has yet been committed to reducing speed limits to 20 mph on non-major residential roads.
- (6) Therefore, instructs the Director of Technical Services, in consultation with residents, Area Forums and ward councillors to commence the programme of works necessary to implement 20mph speed limits on all non-major residential roads, setting out a prioritised timetable for completion of the scheme and starting with existing 'Accidents Down 2 Zero' areas, where appropriate.

(5) LOW PAID WIRRAL COUNCIL WORKERS – PAY INCREASE

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council notes:

- (1) That the previous Labour Government brought this country to the brink of bankruptcy doubled the national debt and left us with the biggest budget deficit in our peacetime history.
- (2) That as a country we have to spend more than £120 million every single day just to pay off the interest on Labour's debt and this is in fact Labour's true legacy.
- (3) The previous Council coalition administration listened to Wirral residents and delivered a budget that saved £52 million, invested in economic development and child protection, protected key services, delivered a zero percent Council Tax increase leaving Council balances of £14 million and reduced the Council's debt by £10 million.
- (4) That despite having to make difficult decisions to achieve this, provision was made, and the Council's current budget contains, £800,000 specifically to ensure that the Council's lowest paid workers receive a £250 non consolidated pay increase.

Council believes that the current increase in global commodity prices is having a real impact on the price of groceries and fuel.

Council thanks our better paid staff for their understanding and acceptance of the need for a public sector pay freeze, due to the previous Labour Government's profligacy and debt, however, in the interest of fairness, wishes to assist those who earn the least and are often impacted the most when commodity and other prices rise.

Council therefore insists:

- (1) As a matter of urgency all required action is taken by the current Labour Administration to ensure the Council honours the implied bargain of a general public sector pay freeze with a £250 payment to those employed by the Council and earning below £21,000 per year.
- (2) A report is provided to all members of the Council informing us of the progress of discussions with staff representatives and when this payment will be made
- (3) Subject to agreement with the Director of Law, HR & Asset management, the content of this resolution is communicated to all staff.

(6) SELF DIRECTED CARE AND PERSONAL BUDGETS

Proposed by Councillor Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council welcomes the freedom and choice given to Wirral residents by self directed care and personal budgets

Council notes:

- (1) The national target requiring, in compliance with NI130, Wirral to facilitate self directed assessments with 30% of service users.
- (2) The Labour led Wirral Council had, at the end of the activity year 2009 – 2010, achieved just 8% of such assessments.
- (3) That in response to this inadequate and unacceptable performance last year's coalition administration extended the personalisation project to all service users and required an increase in those residents benefiting from self directed support for the remainder of the activity year 2010 – 2011 and every subsequent year.
- (4) The result reported that at the end of May 2011 Wirral had offered 41% of eligible residents self directed support, improving our performance from where Labour left us in the bottom 5 to comfortably in the top third of 153 authorities.
- (5) All Council contracts for domiciliary care, personal supported living and residential and nursing care have been updated to ensure the service will be

provided in a personalised way and focussed on delivering outcomes such as improved health and well being and dignity in care.

Council further notes:

- (1) The replacement of the HART service with the STAR service (short term assessment and reablement) and the important role it plays in helping people to return home and live independently following illness and discharge from hospital.
- (2) The critical role the STAR service has in supporting people through an assessment and recovery process and facilitating the opportunity for a support planned and personal budget to be organised following their discharge from the service.
- (3) The previous coalition administration's plans for the STAR service to be co-located with Wirral University Teaching Hospital and the DASS locality teams and to ensure the independent providers of the enablement part of the new service is thorough and of high quality, as requested by residents in the 'Wirral Future' consultation, is progressing well.
- (4) The changes made have provided further opportunity to develop integrated working with Wirral University Teaching Hospital, particularly around the work of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, community nurses and the planning for effective discharge.
- (5) The most recent reports show that the number of delayed discharges from hospital has been reduced to zero and the Department, together with Wirral University Teaching Hospital and Wirral NHS have been asked to present to a regional conference as a case study of excellence in partnership working.

Council expresses its thanks and appreciation to:

The new Director, all of the staff and leaders within DASS and across the Council, who have worked so hard to achieve this strategic and transformational change in the breadth and quality of service provided to Wirral residents.

The new independent providers, NHS Wirral and the Wirral University Teaching Hospital for their support and partnership working to create a truly integrated care pathway.

Former Councillor Bob Moon for resisting the opposition calls to stop this change and sustaining it while receiving the unwarranted personal abuse thrown at him as he worked as the Executive Member for DASS with his department and partners to ensure the former coalition administration's vision for a transformed public service was delivered.

Council requests:

The new processes, including the resource allocation model (RAS), continue to be monitored closely, with any further opportunities for improvements identified and reported.

Subject to agreement with the Director of Law, HR & Asset Management, the content of this resolution and the Council's thanks be communicated to all DASS, Finance, Strategic Change and internal Comms staff involved in achieving this transformation.

(7) MERSEYTRAVEL ALLOWANCES

Proposed by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Seconded by Councillor Bob Wilkins

- (1) This Council welcomes attempts by Liberal Democrat and Conservative councillors to increase transparency and public accountability through calls for an independent remuneration panel to be set up to investigate Merseytravel allowances paid to councillors.
- (2) Council notes that Merseytravel is the only travel authority not to have an independent review for members' allowances and expresses its disappointment and concern that the Labour-dominated authority has rejected the plan for their allowances to be set independently, choosing instead to set their own salaries and allowances.
- (3) Council urges Merseytravel members from Wirral to push for an independent review to happen at the earliest opportunity.

(8) LOCALISM FOR MERSEYRAIL

Proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley

Seconded by Councillor Les Rowlands

- (1) This Council notes with disappointment the decision made by the controlling Labour Group on the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority to end immediately, without further reports, or the results of any business case study the opportunity to take local control of the Merseyrail Electrics network from Network Rail.
- (2) Council notes that this process has been ongoing for many years, and that in 2005/06 a business case for Full Local Decision Making (FLDM) was prepared and submitted showing clear benefits for Merseyside. This was endorsed by the Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority and was a Key Policy in Local Transport Plan Two (LTP2).
- (3) Council further notes that FLDM was relaunched as Localism for Merseyrail (LFM) in 2010 and that the imperative for greater local control over the network infrastructure remains and the commitment to developing the case for this was reiterated in Local Transport Plan Three (LTP3).

- (4) Council also notes that LFM has the support of the Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) and the Rail Freight Industry.
- (5) Council believes that a fully integrated Merseyrail network would be in the best interests of Merseyside's commuters and would enable local people and rail customers to have greater say in the decisions taken affecting the rail network in Merseyside.

Council therefore requests:

- (1) That the Chief Executive writes to the Chief Executive and Director General of Merseytravel, Neil Scales, and to the Chairman of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority (MITA), expressing our Council's disappointment at the decision made at the Authority's meeting on 27th June, 2011.
- (2) That MITA reverse the decision made at its meeting of the 27th June and ask that Merseytravel Passenger Transport Executive (MPTE) commission a Business Case Study to determine benefits and risks of LFM. The results of that study are considered by a future MITA Authority meeting before a final decision is made on whether to move this matter forward to the next stage.

(9) BUDGET OVERSPEND

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

- (1) Council expresses its dismay at the £5.3m overspend on last year's budget in Adult Social Services, Children's Services and Technical Services, as reported to the meeting of Cabinet on the 23rd June.
- (2) In view of the massive cut in Council funding approved by the previous administration and given that the pressures creating the overspends were well known, Council believes that corrective action should have been taken at an earlier stage in order to avoid placing more pressure on the current year's budget.
- (3) Council notes that these overspends have been covered by one-off savings from Treasury Management and Housing Benefit, however, as resources get scarcer such one-off sums cannot be relied upon to bail out over-spending areas.
- (4) Council therefore takes this opportunity to remind Chief Officers that they have a Constitutional responsibility: *"to ensure that spending remains within the services overall cash limit and that individual budget heads are not overspent, by monitoring the budget and taking appropriate corrective action where significant variations from the approved budget are forecast."*

(10) BRITAIN'S LOST TALENT

Proposed by Councillor Ann McLachlan

Seconded by Councillor Tony Smith

Council notes that:

- (1) Under the Tory-led Government youth unemployment has hit almost one million, or 1 in 5 young people;
- (2) The coalition government has scrapped Labour's successful Future Jobs Fund and abolished Labour's guarantee of work or training for every 18-24 year old on the dole for six months;
- (3) Putting young people on the dole is not just a waste of talent but a waste of money. Failing to get Britain back to work fast enough is helping to push up welfare waste by £12.5 billion, the equivalent of £500 per household.

Council supports Labour's 'Britain's Lost Talent' campaign which calls for the coalition government to repeat last year's bank bonus tax and use a portion of the money raised to create over 100,000 youth jobs and prevent another lost generation like the 1980s.

(11) VAT RE-THINK TO JUMP-START ECONOMIC GROWTH

Proposed by Councillor Phil Davies

Seconded by Councillor Pat Hackett

Council notes that:

- (1) Retail sales fell by twice the expected rate in May (1.4%).
- (2) The Office of Budget Responsibility has revised its overall growth forecasts for 2011 from 2.6% to 1.7%.
- (3) Unemployment forecasts for the next 4 years have been revised upwards. Inflation forecasts for the end of 2011 have risen sharply from 1.6% to 4.2% with a further increase next year.

In the light of evidence that economic recovery is at best sluggish and at worst has completely stalled, Council calls for the coalition government to reverse temporarily the 2.5% increase in VAT introduced in January until the economy is growing strongly again.

Council agrees that slowing down the pace of deficit reduction with a temporary VAT cut now would give the flat-lining economy the jump-start it so urgently needs, boost jobs especially in the retail sector, and be a better way to get the deficit down for the long term.

(12) FAIR DEAL FOR WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes

Seconded by Councillor Phil Davies

- (1) Council notes that, under current proposals for the localisation of business rates, Wirral could be severely disadvantaged as the area would raise far less in business rates than it currently receives as part of a national redistribution of rates.
- (2) Council notes that the proposals contain an initial equalisation of resources to prevent any immediate loss, but that this would be a one off solution and that over time the gap between what Wirral can collect and the resources available to other wealthier councils will grow considerably, adding to the disparity of resources between richer and poorer areas already created by specifically targeting cuts on the Area Based Grant which was designed to help poorer areas.
- (3) Council therefore re-iterates its demand that any new system should be designed in such a way that Wirral and similar Councils with a low economic base and high levels of deprivation should be given a Fair Deal and not deprived of much needed resources.