

COUNCIL – 15 JULY 2019

Motions

The following motions have been submitted in accordance with the notice required by Standing Order 7(1) and are listed in accordance with Standing Order 7(2).

(1) A BETTER OFFER FOR CARE LEAVERS

Proposed by Councillor Tom Usher

Seconded by Councillor Kate Cannon

Council notes that the new Offer for Care Leavers reflects a commitment to do the right thing by the young people in our care. Those involved, both from the Council and our partner organisations should be thanked for their work and determination, especially those young people at the Care Leaver's Council and beyond who helped shape this new offer.

Council also makes the assurance that it will continue to listen to children and young people in its efforts to improve the offer. We are resolute that one of the most important responsibilities of any government, local or national is to ensure children and young people get the best possible start to their life. Council supports the decision to exempt care leavers from Council Tax and to write off any arrears owed.

The Council supports the £20m investment made in 2018/19 and is committed to continued investment in Children's services. However, our commitment and aspirations for our young people are made more difficult by the government's refusal to act on the crisis in social care funding. If austerity is truly over, Council calls on the government to set children as their number one priority, provide adequate funding for local councils, and reverse some of the harmful cuts in services that have led to a record number of children in care. In the sixth richest country in the world we should not have more than one in four children living in poverty in the UK. This statistic shames us all.

(2) RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Proposed by Councillor Ian Lewis

Seconded by Councillor Tom Anderson

Council believes that at the heart of preparing children for life in modern Britain is making sure that they understand the world they are growing up in.

Council welcomes the publication of guidance for schools on relationships, sex and health education by the Department for Education and agrees with the statement by Stonewall that it marks a 'real, positive step forward for LGBT inclusion in England's schools' to help ensure all children have the knowledge they need to grow up healthy, happy and safe.

Council urges all schools in Wirral to take steps now to ensure compliance with the guidance ahead of the introduction of compulsory relationships education for primary-age pupils and compulsory relationships and sex education for secondary-age pupils, and compulsory health education for all pupils in state-funded schools from September 2020.

Council also looks forward to the work by the expert group convened by the Secretary of State to support the effective implementation of these new subjects in schools, which includes teaching unions such as the NAHT, sector experts, representatives of faith groups, parents and young people.

(3) INVESTING TO CHANGE OUR URBAN SCENE

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council believes that there is a need for a step change or programme of improvements to the quality of the urban scene in Wirral. The footways leading to local shopping centres and the areas of dropped kerbs and crossings need upgrading in some areas to provide safe, convenient and attractive routes for pedestrians and the users of electric buggies.

Council notes that there has been a measurable decline in the condition of Wirral's roads and that the recently announced maintenance programme is constrained by the financial pressures facing the Borough. Some local shopping centres have areas of damaged footways and need investment to ensure these are not only safe but are even and attractive environments.

Council considers that the use of prudential borrowing may provide a way of investing in road surfaces, footways and cycling facilities. The opportunity could be taken to look at modifications to improve safety, reduce speeds and improve facilities for parking, pedestrians and cyclists. This might enable the creation of a more pleasant environment, especially in congested areas and around schools.

Council recommends that Cabinet invites Ward Members to submit reports on the areas that they believe need to be upgraded. This would be over and above minor maintenance but should be a series of suggestions for turning the decline around. A target date for submissions should be offered so that a planned programme of improvement can be drawn up.

Council also requests that Cabinet reports back on how long it would take to address the backlog of highway repairs at current spending levels and how the deterioration might be reversed and resourced through prudential borrowing.

(4) GLYPHOSATE-FREE WIRRAL

Proposed by Councillor Steve Hayes

Seconded by Councillor Chris Cooke

Council notes:

The use of pesticides such as glyphosate in the UK has increased by 60% in real terms since 1990 [1]. Italy, Portugal and the Canadian city of Vancouver have all banned the use of glyphosate [or glyphosate based weed killers] and France is working towards this. Mosanto and German owner Bayer face 9,000 lawsuits in the USA from those that believe their illnesses are caused by their products, the first plaintiff won unanimously with many more to follow [2]. Recent studies published in ScienceDirect show a 41% increased risk of Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma caused by exposure from glyphosate-based weed killers and products [3].

Council believes:

- There is compelling evidence that glyphosate and a wide range of other herbicides and pesticides may be harmful to human health
- The use of pesticides and weed killers reduces biodiversity, impacting negatively on insects, birds and bees, in a time when the world is losing 2.5% of its insect population per-year [4].
- Harmful weed killer residues can creep into the food chain.
- Pets and children should not be playing in parks, in our streets or any area treated with such chemicals.

Council recommends that cabinet resolves to:

- Phase out the use of all pesticides and weed killers on council land.
- Cut out all use of glyphosate based treatments in all council-owned parks within one year and across all council-owned land within two years.
- Trial pesticide-free alternatives during this period. Particularly those adopted by the likes of Hammersmith and Fulham and Lewes Councils who use biodegradable foam or hot steam treatments on weeds.
- Grant an exception to the above ban regarding the control of Japanese knotweed, or other invasive species, where there are currently no effective mechanical techniques available. However, in this case chemicals such as glyphosate will only be stem-injected, rather than sprayed, to reduce its spread in the environment.

- Grant an exception on sprays only in relation to Giant Hogweed where it's not safe to be dug out or safely removed by other means and then cordon off the surrounding area.
- Write to the prime minister to inform the government of this Council's opposition to glyphosate-based pesticides and to call for a UK-wide programme to phase out their use.

1. <http://www.pan-uk.org/pesticides-agriculture-uk/> Link to external page/site

2. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/oct/07/monsanto-trial-cancer-appeal-glyphosate-chemical> Link to external page/site

3. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1383574218300887> Link to external page/site

4. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/feb/10/plummeting-insect-numbers-threaten-collapse-of-nature-> Link to external page/site

(5) VERGES AND POLLINATORS

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Chris Blakeley

Council notes the public interest in, and appreciation of, the scheme in Rotherham where the main Ring road has, for some years, had areas planted with native wild flowers.

As these have created an attractive visual environment and encouraged pollinators Council requests Cabinet to instruct officers to:

- a) report in detail on such a scheme, the cost of introduction and potential maintenance
- b) offer advice on suitable areas for similar planting in Wirral
- c) consider an area for an initial trial scheme in Wirral
- d) draw up proposals for consultation regarding further areas where this could be introduced

and present this report for consideration by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a timetable that might enable a trial scheme to commence in 2020.

(6) KEEP FREE TV LICENSES FOR OVER 75S

Proposed by Councillor Chris Jones

Seconded by Councillor Sharon Jones

Introduced by a Labour Government in 2000 the introduction of free TV licences helped alleviate hardship for many people over the age of 75, a high proportion of whom are in the lowest three income deciles.

However, the present government has outsourced to the BBC new 'means testing' whereby only older people who receive Pension Credit benefit will receive free TV licenses. They are amongst the poorest in our society. Yet two fifths of those entitled to the benefit aren't getting it. Some simply don't know they can claim, many may struggle even to discover how to claim, and many are embarrassed about needing help. Many older people have struggled through their working lives to accumulate a little extra for retirement. But that small 'rainy day' pot means they are excluded from means-tested benefits. Many of that age are coping with the costs of diminished health or disability. Many have outlived their life partners and are alone and lonely. Taking away their TV license is a cruel blow.

Council calls on this 'Austerity Government' to reverse a mean, means-testing measure, foisted by proxy onto the BBC, that contrasts so vividly with the wish of some politicians to give even greater tax reductions to the super-rich.

(7) TV LICENCES

Proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley

Seconded by Councillor Mary Jordan

Council notes and condemns the decision made by the BBC to remove free TV licenses from over 75s except for those on pension credit.

Council believes that this decision could have a negative effect on the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

Therefore, Council requests the Chief Executive to write to the Director General of the BBC to relay the Council's views and opposition and calls on the BBC to think again and reinstate unconditionally free TV licenses for over 75s.

(8) INCONSIDERATE PARKING AROUND SCHOOLS

Proposed by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Seconded by Councillor Alan Brame

Council notes that inconsiderate parking around schools has a detrimental impact on the local environment and has safety implications for children using the local road network to walk or cycle to school.

Council is aware that this is an issue that affects schools in Wirral and elsewhere in the country. Council notes that initiatives have been introduced in other parts of the country to tackle the problem, notably...

in Solihull

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/Parking-travel-roads/road-safety/Solihull-School-Streets-Pilot/How-will-it-work>)

in Edinburgh

http://www.streetsaheadinburgh.org.uk/streetsahead/info/35/school_travel/87/school_streets

in Hackney

<https://www.hackney.gov.uk/school-streets>

...who have each explored introducing Controlled Parking Zones around their worst effected schools. Council believes that it is time that such schemes were introduced around targeted Wirral schools, especially primary schools.

Council recommends that Cabinet should introduce Controlled Parking Zones schemes at selected schools, with the residential areas around Townfield Primary School and Raeburn Primary School selected as suitable pilot areas.

(9) THE TORIES' NATIONAL HOUSING SHORTAGE, POVERTY INCOMES, UNEMPLOYMENT AND PRIVATE-SECTOR OVERCROWDING

Proposed by Councillor Adrian Jones

Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

Council notes government announcements claiming the highest statistical rates of employment in decades, implying that serious UK unemployment is virtually a thing of the past.

Council further notes that to effect a favourable presentation of this claim millions of adults are shown in government publicity as 'employed' who are in fact under-employed working only part-time in low paid jobs.

TUC research shows that accurately weighted accounting would add a further 1.3 million to the real unemployment total – demonstrating that analysis exposing the extent of austerity driven poverty-wages and uncovering statistically masked unemployment shows the true situation in a bleaker light.

Council further notes that: *"More people are being pushed to the hard edge of the housing crisis by crippling private rents, frozen benefits and endless waiting lists for social homes that don't exist."* (Liverpool Echo report, May 31st 2019.)

Simultaneous analysis from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reveals: *"A poverty cloud is hanging over 42% of workers in the North West with almost a million earning below £20,000 a year."* (Liverpool Echo report, 8th June 2019.)

Council further notes that the government's continuing 'austerity' policy of wage depression, underscoring its low-wage, post-industrial poverty-economy, combined with the greatest dearth of house building since the decades after the First World War, encourages increasing conversion of former Wirral family homes and shops into multi occupancy dwellings which, through over-crowding and high rents, risks today's creation of tomorrow's slums.

Council believes everybody should have access to decent housing as a fundamental right and applauds Wirral's Housing Standards Team, and Selective Licensing scheme, for significantly influencing the quality of Wirral's private sector housing stock but believes the tendency to over-crowding can only practicably be reversed by large scale development of high-quality council housing at *genuinely* affordable rents.

Council therefore calls upon the cabinet member for Housing and Planning to:

- Work closely with Homes England and other partners to tackle viability issues and maximise development on brown field land in Wirral;
- examine options to increase the supply of genuinely affordable quality homes to meet housing need; and
- develop a Policy approach via the planning system to respond to potential over-crowding by the creation of further Houses in Multiple Occupation

Council would therefore welcome measures by central government to alleviate the risk of multi-millions of pounds of HRE (Housing Revenue Account) clawback from previous stock transfers and notes that a Labour Government would remove that anomaly.

Finally, Council recalls with immense pleasure the Wirral Conservative Leader's recent declaration in favour of large-scale Wirral council housing, proposals that accord uncharacteristically with our Wirral Labour administration's – and Jeremy Corbyn's.

(10) TYRED

Proposed by Councillor Ian Lewis

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

Council welcomes, finally, the decision by the Department for Transport to implement a limit on the age of tyres that can be used on buses, coaches, lorries and minibuses and thanks Frances Molloy and the team at Tyred for the relentless pursuit of a long overdue change in the law to improve road safety.

(11) CUTTING POLLUTION IN THE INTERESTS OF ALL

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist

Seconded by Councillor Dave Mitchell

Council recognises that in January 2019, the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP launched the Clean Air Strategy 2019, describing air pollution as a 'health emergency':

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/air-pollution-is-a-health-emergency>

Council also notes that in March 2019, Public Health England published a substantial report on the relationship between air pollution and health:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-outdoor-air-quality-and-health-review-of-interventions>

In addition to this, the National Planning Policy Framework published in July 2018 states that:

102. Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals so that:
- d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account - including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains....

Council also appreciates that the Air Quality Annual Status Report brings together findings relating to air pollution in Wirral and compares the findings at various monitoring sites through time:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/environmental%20problems/Pollution/Wirral%20ASR%202018.pdf>

Council also welcomes all the publicity given in the build-up to, and following, Clean Air Day on 20 June 2019, involving local schools.

Council considers that:

- a) all these interventions and approaches need to be strengthened and coordinated;
- b) there is a need to reduce congestion and air pollution around our schools and build on wider public support for tackling environmental issues;
- c) the development of the Local Plan needs to take account of the latest initiatives on tackling pollution and environmental concerns.

To this end, Council requests that the Health and Wellbeing Board, at its meeting on 13 November 2019, should review these issues to ensure that these various projects and initiatives are considered, together with the aim of coordinating, building upon and extending them.

Council requests that this review and the outcome of the discussion on policy should be referred to the Cabinet so that the issues can be progressed.

(12) BOROUGH OF CULTURE

Proposed by Councillor Christine Spriggs

Seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson

Council welcomes the Wirral-led partnership that has made the 'Borough of Culture' year so far such an overwhelming success. As part of our Wirral Plan we pledged to encourage more Wirral people to enjoy the wide range of culture and arts opportunities on offer across our Borough and so far, in the first half of the programme; an estimated 100,000 visitors have attended Borough of Culture events and it is anticipated some 500,000 residents and visitors will do so over the course of the year. Amazing high-quality events that have taken place so far include the spectacular **Animated Square** event, the **Witching Hour** event taking place in our wonderful and historic Birkenhead Park, the **OVO Energy Tour Series** and now a season of **Art Outdoors** happening across the Borough.

Council notes that over £140k has already been secured through grant, sponsorship and commercial opportunities, including the largest ever successful grant of £130k secured from Arts Council England; that over 100 local Wirral residents have been trained to act as volunteers and have supported the delivery of the Borough of Culture programme, equating to over 300 volunteering hours; that over 90% of visitors have rated the quality of all events so far this year, as either 'good', or 'very good' and *welcomes the news that an anticipated overall economic impact of £7m over the course of the year will be achieved.*

Council also agrees with **Arts Council England** that from providing jobs to making places better to live, arts and culture make a huge contribution to the economy.

Council therefore congratulates the Culture and Tourism team and the wider council staff teams and our partners who have worked so hard on every aspect of the programme and welcomes the second half of our highly successful Wirral Borough of Culture year.

(13) WIRRAL VIEW

Proposed by Councillor Tony Cox

Seconded by Councillor Steve Williams

Council notes that Wirral View newspaper has, to date, cost £402,000 of taxpayers' money but continues to fail to reach all parts of the Borough.

Council further notes that the Authority has, itself, chosen to advertise in the independent, free local media rather than its own publication.

Council therefore asks Cabinet to end its support for this publication.

(14) PROTECTING WIRRAL'S HERITAGE SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Proposed by Councillor Chris Carubia

Seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly

Council welcomes the work being undertaken by Wirral Archaeology to explore and publicise Wirral's valuable Viking heritage.

Council looks forward to receiving information on their past, current and future findings that will enable Wirral to add to the understanding and appreciation of this heritage.

Council notes that the Unitary Development Plan has a detailed policy and justification relating to non-scheduled remains in Section CH25 which states that...

"Where archaeological remains are of significant importance and can only be appropriately preserved in-situ, the Local Planning Authority will assess the impact of the proposals, in terms of the potential disturbance to be caused to those remains and

their setting. Where those remains cannot be accommodated within the layout of a revised development scheme or where it is not appropriate to do so, planning permission will be refused."

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/planning%20and%20building/Local%20Plans%20and%20planning%20policy/Local%20plans/Unitary%20Development%20Plan/UDP%20Written%20Statement%20Sections/9.%20Heritage%20and%20Conservation.pdf>

In addition, Council notes that the National Planning Policy Framework places emphasis on sites of archaeological interest and such heritage assets (see section 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) and states at paragraph 189 that....

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation."

Council believes that these policies offer important protection to various sites throughout Wirral and asks Cabinet to report on how, as part of the current work on the Local Plan, sites of potential archaeological importance can be properly protected and recognised.

(15) MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (MFRS)

Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny

Seconded by Councillor Jean Stapleton

This Wirral Council:

1. Recognises and applauds Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) for enhancing the reputation of Merseyside following its very strong performance in the recent Inspection carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The Inspectorate deemed Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority as GOOD when considering.

- How effective they are in keeping people safe from fire and other risks
- How efficient they are in keeping people safe from fire and other risks
- How well they look after their people

but notably, OUTSTANDING in the areas of preventing fires and national resilience – the only Service in the Country to receive 2 Outstanding's for its work.

2. Notes that this is the highest 'performance' in the Country, from the first two rounds of inspection.
3. Congratulates the Chief Fire Officer for his leadership and his team for their hard work and tenacity, notably his Fire Fighters; Fire Prevention teams; Protection Officers; Support Services and the representative bodies, who along with the members of the MFRA have achieved this recognition.
4. Agrees that the political decision to - support an operational model which only utilises professional full time firefighters, to partner with the Home Office as lead authority for national resilience, to maintain a 10 minute response standard (5 min 40 sec average attendance time), to resource to demand, to increase the number of fire engines, to improve the diversity of the workforce, to invest in up to date fit for purpose Community Fire and Rescue Stations, whilst giving home fire prevention very high priority; has contributed to the result and findings of the inspectorate.
5. Notes that the proposed changes to the Integrated Risk Management Plan will help to maintain night time cover at Wallasey Fire Station and for the Wirral in General, as part of a plan to improve staff availability, increase the numbers of fire engines and update the general staffing system within the Authority, further contributing to the safety of Merseyside.
6. Believes that the results would have been even better if the Government had maintained the proper level of funding for MFRA, who have suffered some of the largest cuts to Government grant in the country, but have tenaciously hung on to full time firefighters whilst maintaining an emphasis on community fire prevention, in order to help keep Merseyside safe.