

Council – 5 December 2022

Motions – with effect of proposed amendments incorporated

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. MANDATORY VOTER ID CHECKS COULD STOP PEOPLE VOTING

Proposed by Councillor Janette Williamson

Seconded by Councillor Helen Collinson

The Government are determined to push ahead with the implementation of mandatory Voter ID to 'combat voter fraud' despite little evidence of such fraud. In fact there were only 6 known cases of voter fraud in the last election (as admitted by the previous Secretary of State for Health, Matt Hancock MP).

A study commissioned by the Cabinet Office has shown that more than 2 million people lack the necessary ID to vote in elections. Council believes the Government have cynically and deliberately attempted to exclude young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds from the democratic process. This will mean that many Wirral residents will be unable to exercise their right to vote because of lack of appropriate ID.

Councils will have to issue Wirral voters with an electoral identity document, at an estimated cost nationally of £15m, and it is very unlikely this process will be ready until January 2023 with limited time to make residents aware of the new rules, cope with last minute applications or gauge demand. Most importantly, Council believes the Voter ID checks could stop people from voting, suppress turnout amongst disadvantaged groups and ultimately sway results with the real possibility of challenges in court. Council believes this is an unnecessary distraction and focus should be on addressing major concerns such as media bias, low turnout and not introducing a barrier preventing voters exercising their democratic right to vote.

Wirral Council has suffered 12 years of austerity and is facing huge budget challenges. This is a drain on time and resources and driven by a Conservative Government who Council believes are attempting to manipulate elections in a manner that demeans our democracy.

Wirral Council calls on the Government to delay the implementation of mandatory Voter ID checks at next year's local elections as there is still lack of clarity about the rules and a short timetable to establish the system which could leave hundreds of Wirral residents disenfranchised.

If, despite the many arguments against, mandatory checks are introduced for the elections in May 2023 Council believes that the earliest possible implementation and timely delivery of any voter ID procedures will be essential to ensure as few residents as possible are disenfranchised. We therefore call on government to

ensure that adequate funds are made available to local authorities to implement any changes.

(ADDITIONAL WORDING – GREEN GROUP AMENDMENT)

2. PROTECTING THE SERVICES OUR RESIDENTS WANT

Proposed by Councillor Tom Anderson
Seconded by Councillor Jenny Johnson

Council understands it exists to provide services which residents rely upon. ~~Every penny the Council spends on itself is money that is not available to spend on those services.~~ However, Council recognises that in 2011, the Tory led council made 1100 staff redundant, and it has relied upon a diminished but committed workforce ever since, and we thank them for that.

Council notes that despite the Conservative Group not supporting the Wirral Plan Update, Council remains committed to working to achieve: ~~is committed to:~~

- A sustainable environment
- Brighter futures for all our residents
- An inclusive economy
- Safe and vibrant communities
- Active and healthy lives for all our residents

Council recognises that first impressions count; how the Borough looks fundamentally affects how our residents feel about where they live and how the Council is performing. Council also recognises that to protect and deliver these services at their current levels it needs adequate funding from a government that has inflicted 11 years of austerity on local councils which looks to resume following the impending public sector cuts of £35bn, who have lost 60p in every £1.

Council understands our residents expect the grass to be cut, and they expect the streets to be free from litter and potholes filled. They expect the vulnerable to be cared for with high-quality social care, to be protected with vital and life-saving public health measures and to address the growing climate emergency which Full Council agreed in 2019.

Council ~~welcomes the statement by the Leader of the Council reported in the local media that a “Council tax rise is ‘not on cards’ in Wirral”~~ and recognises that Council Tax rises impact disproportionately on the lowest income families and deplores the recent Autumn Statement by Jeremy Hunt which seeks to balance the £55bn black hole in the economy as reported in the media to have been caused by the Truss/Kwarteng ‘mini-budget’ off the backs of Council Tax payers and up to £35bn in public sector cuts.

Council, therefore, calls on all Members to meet the challenge of providing decent

Council Services, paid for at a price families can afford. Council also calls on all members to work together to deliver a legal and balanced budget and to protect the services that residents deserve, and to renew its request to Government, in writing with a letter signed by all Group Leaders to fund Wirral fairly to do so in the forthcoming settlement on or around December 19th .

(DELETIONS AND INSERTIONS – LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT)

2. PROTECTING THE SERVICES OUR RESIDENTS WANT

Proposed by Councillor Tom Anderson
Seconded by Councillor Jenny Johnson

Council understands it exists to provide services which residents rely upon, but recognises that this has become more difficult in this period of high inflation, increased material costs and shortages, along with fluctuating energy prices. Council recognises that every penny the Council spends on itself is money that is not available to spend on those services and supports the ongoing programme of reducing overheads and the number of buildings.

Council is committed to:

- A sustainable environment
- Brighter futures for all our residents
- An inclusive economy
- Safe and vibrant communities
- Active and healthy lives for all our residents

Council recognises that first impressions count; how the Borough looks fundamentally affects how our residents feel about where they live and how the Council is performing so welcomes plans to secure a closer working relationship with its contractors to manage and target resources that are under pressure.

Council understands our residents expect the grass to be cut, they expect the streets to be free from litter and potholes filled.

Council welcomes the statement by the Leader of the Council reported in the local media that a “Council tax rise is 'not on cards' in Wirral” and recognises that Council Tax rises impact disproportionately on the lowest income families due, in the main, to the valuations used in this unfair system which is overdue for overhaul or replacement. However, it is clear that final budgets and Council Tax levels can only be finalised in the full knowledge of the settlement expected to be announced by the Government on or around 19 December.

Council therefore calls on all Members to meet the challenge of providing decent Council Services, paid for at a price families can afford. In so doing,

Council recognises the very real constraints that have been made clear by Cllr Izzy Seccombe, the Leader of the Conservative Group on the Local Government Association, when she set out her honest assessment of the situation facing us all:

'Without immediate additional funding, councils will face increasingly difficult decisions about which services to stop providing, meaning not just isolated closures of individual facilities but significant cuts to the services people rely on, including those to the most vulnerable. It is important that we are honest with central government about these pressures'

[\(https://conservativehome.com/2022/11/18/izzi-seccombe-local-government-is-ready-to-step-up-to-the-financial-challenge-by-championing-innovation-and-partnership-working/\)](https://conservativehome.com/2022/11/18/izzi-seccombe-local-government-is-ready-to-step-up-to-the-financial-challenge-by-championing-innovation-and-partnership-working/)

(DELETIONS AND INSERTIONS – LIBERAL DEMOCRAT AMENDMENT)

3. WIRRAL NEEDS MORE TRAIN SERVICES NOT LESS

Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird

Seconded by Councillor Amanda Onwuemene

In August 2022, Merseyrail took the unilateral decision to slash train services to Bromborough Rake and Green Lane stations from six per hour to two per hour. This decision was made without public consultation or any known disability or social impact assessment. Bromborough is the only accessible train station between Bebington and Hooton. Green Lane serves that part of Wirral with the lowest levels of car ownership.

Merseyrail, owned by Serco and Abellio, justify their decision by a 10% improvement in reliability for the remaining stations between Hamilton Square and Chester. The company could use the same rationale to reduce services to other stations as well. Trains to and from Chester often wait for many minutes at Birkenhead Central station instead of picking up passengers at Green Lane and Bromborough Rake.

To date, over 500 people have signed a petition to restore the service. Merseyrail has so far dismissed their concerns.

Merseyrail says services will be restored when new trains, first commissioned in 2016, are in use across the network. The new trains are already many years late and there is no date for their roll out on the Wirral line.

In support of the Council's Wirral Plan, Local Plan, and net zero carbon targets, Wirral Council resolves to:

1. Work towards a clean, reliable, frequent, affordable train service to be proud of.

2. Publicly oppose Merseyrail's reduction in train services on the Wirral Line and calls on Merseyrail to fully restore train services immediately.
3. Urge the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor and Transport Committee to publicly oppose these and any future reductions in train services on the Wirral.

Furthermore Council supports the Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram in his Campaign to establish a "London Style Public Transport System " across the Liverpool City Region.

Additionally, Council notes that there is a review meeting with Mersey Rail already arranged for the 8th December and Wirral Council calls for the outcome of that meeting to notified to Council straight away.

Council calls on Councillors on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee to continue to work together to ensure the best possible level of service for all Wirral Rail users and regrets the operational issues currently being experienced on the Chester Line.

Council notes that at the last meeting of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Transport Committee, public assurances were given to review the current situation in light of public comments and submissions from Ward Councillors and we should all work together to bring about improvements as soon as possible.

(ADDITIONAL WORDING – LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT)

4. PAYING MORE FOR LESS AFTER DAMAGING DECISIONS

**Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia**

Council believes that the Truss/Kwarteng 'mini budget' on 23 September 2022 has been hugely damaging to the national economy. Its lasting effect is widely acknowledged, and it will continue to hit the Wirral economy and residents for several years to come.

Council recognises that the impact of high inflation and higher mortgage rates will affect many Wirral residents who are already struggling to cope with high energy costs this winter.

Council notes that the measures introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his 17 November 2022 Autumn Statement rely heavily on an unfair Council Tax system.

Council deplores the decision to delay the introduction of vital reforms to Social Care which prolongs the uncertainty that has affected the long-term solutions put forward to provide the care needed for our ageing population.

Council believes that statutory services, such as Social Care, should be funded by central Government rather than through the unfair Council Tax system.

Council believes local, discretionary services should be funded by a reformed property tax that better reflects local land and property values.

Council condemns the Conservative Government for creating the chaotic economic conditions that are now pushing the Council Tax increase for Wirral residents towards the five per cent figure. All this during a period of high inflation.

Wirral's people will once again be asked to pay out more for less services. This is an unacceptable solution to the financial pressures facing local services.

Council, therefore, calls on the Government to resume work on a fairer funding system for local Government that will help areas such as Wirral, which has such a high proportion of properties in lower tax bands, to support much-needed local services.

5. FOOD IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Proposed by Councillor Sue Percy
Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart

The Chancellor says that education is a priority.

Food is an essential part of the school day. Teachers know that without food children cannot learn.

We all know that our school communities are struggling.

Parents are skipping meals to make sure children have enough. Schools are starting food banks. Teachers are paying for pupils' food out of their own pockets. Children are sharing their lunches with friends who do not have enough.

The Autumn Budget Statement which the Government has produced was an opportunity to do what is right and ensure every child gets a hot dinner at school every day but has no provision in it to extend free school meals for all primary school children. This is an investment in our country's economic future and this government is failing to help.

There's still time for the Government to do the right thing.

Over 130 civil society leaders (and counting) are calling for Free School Meals for All. Because a hot, nutritious school dinner is an essential for setting children up for success.

Teachers, doctors, nurses, nutritionists, chefs, faith leaders, charities, local authorities, and unions have pledged support.

Council urges all Councillors and local MP's to be brave and to stand with the families they represent and to be a voice for children's futures in local councils and in Westminster.

40 MPs have already signed the open letter calling on the Prime Minister to extend Free School Meals to every child in primary school.

When constituents write in numbers, Councillors and MPs listen.

The Government must step up and do its part.

Let us keep up the momentum. Together, we will secure a brighter future for our children.

Council requests that the Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Education Gillian Keegan to demand fairer funding for the future of our children.