

# COUNCIL

Monday, 10 July 2023

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

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

<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	T Cox	D Kenny
		N Graham	M Redfern

## 18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Civic Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the webcast. He then asked Members to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any matters to be determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Ian Lewis declared a personal interest in relation to item 6a 'Decisions Taken Since the Last Meeting', specifically in relation to minute item 72 of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee, as a trustee of Wallasey Library.

Councillor Angie Davies declared a personal interest in relation to motion 3 'Gill Netting in Wirral' as a member of the Vegan Society and PETA.

Councillor Jeff Green declared a personal interest in relation to item 4a 'Public Questions', specifically the question relating to the installation of a fence at the East Float dock edge by Peel LLP Waters, by virtue of his daughter's employment.

## 19 **CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tony Cox, Naomi Graham, Daisy Kenny and Mike Redfern.

The Civic Mayor spoke of the sad passing of Glenda Jackson, who was born in Birkenhead before moving to London to pursue a career in acting before becoming the MP for Hamstead and Highgate from 1992 to 2015 and paid tribute to her fearlessness and ferocity in both television and in the House of Commons.

The Civic Mayor further reported that he and the Mayoress had already attended over 50 engagements including the Battle of the Atlantic commemorations, opening the Port Sunlight 10k, the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Liverpool John Moores University and the graduations for Wirral Met College, and that they had found the diversity of functions to be fascinating.

## 20 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of Council held on 20 March 2023, 17 May 2023 and 24 May 2023 had been circulated to Members.

It was reported that Councillor Gail Jenkinson's attendance was missing in error from the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2023 and that Councillor Julie McManus' apologies had been listed twice in error in the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2023.

On a motion by the Civic Mayor, seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart, it was –

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 20 March 2023, 17 May 2023 and 24 May 2023 be approved as correct records, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Gail Jenkinson's attendance at the meeting held on 17 May 2023, and the deletion of the duplication of Councillor Julie McManus' apologies at the meeting held on 20 March 2023.**

## 21 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that eight public questions had been received.

Chris Cureton asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on whether the Council supported the introduction of a by law to outlaw the use of gill nets in the Dee and Mersey estuaries and North Wirral foreshore.

In response, Councillor Grey outlined that she supported any move to prevent gill nets and that she hoped the debate on the motion on the matter would answer the questioners concerns.

Arthur Shaw asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council on the installation of a fence at the East Float dock edge for public safety.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined that the matter had been raised with Council officers and Peel Waters LLP, and that Council agrees that the installation of a barrier is the correct course of action but that it was not a public highway and therefore not a matter for which the Council had a responsibility. However, the Council would continue to affirm its position to Peel Waters LLP.

Arthur Shaw asked whether the Council could send a representative to a meeting arrange with Peel Waters LLP on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July on the matter. In response, Councillor Stuart undertook to arrange for an officer to attend the meeting.

Sean Martin asked a question to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on the impact to the roll out of 20 miles per hour zones throughout Wirral, particularly on bus times and taxi fares.

In response, Councillor Grey outlined that most buses spent little time travelling at more than 20mph due to the frequency of stops and the need to negotiate obstacles and that data showed that buses spend less than 25% of their time above 18.5mph. She further outlined that there was no anticipated impact on taxi fares but the consultation on the schemes would be shared with taxi drivers.

Sean Martin outlined the impact on 20mph zones on his journey on Seabank Road which added 1 minute to a 1 mile journey and suggested that the impact would be higher than the quoted data suggested.

The Monitoring Officer read out a question on behalf of John Brace to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council on the Council's request for a Capitalisation Directive in 2021 and what lessons had been learnt by the Council including any training for Councillors.

In response, Councillor Stuart outlined the Council's response to the recommendations from the Independent Assurance Panel with the appointment of a new Director of Finance and Director of Law and Governance, an agreed budget for 2023/24 and the delivery of financial training to all members with an ongoing programme of support planned throughout the municipal year.

The Monitoring Officer read out a question on behalf of John Brace who had asked a question on behalf of the organisation Level 80 to Councillor Janette Williamson as Chair of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee on the shortage of social care workers compared to demand and what actions the Council was taking to provide adequate social care services.

In response, Councillor Williamson outlined the level of support provided in the social care sector with an 11.6% increase in the numbers of old people requiring support during 2023 with £5m invested to pay care Staff the Real Living Wage and £14.7m additional investment for 2023/24 and advised that the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee receives quarterly performance reports detailing this activity.

The Monitoring Officer read out a question on behalf of John Brace asked a question on behalf of the organisation Level 80 to Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde as Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee regarding careers advice for teenagers in Wirral and the best sources of specialist advice.

In response, Councillor Sue Powell-Wilde outlined the various sources of careers advice available to young people in the borough, including the BE MORE careers portal, the annual Careers Show at the Hive Youth Zone and Career Connect. <https://lcrbemore.co.uk/>

Alison Roberts asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council as to why Bromborough Civic Centre and Library had been placed on a proposed asset disposal list when it was being explored for Community Asset Transfer.

In response, Councillor Stuart acknowledged the recommendation of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in relation to Bromborough Civic Centre which sought the progression of consideration of the business cases for Community Asset Transfer of the site alongside the consideration of the Asset Strategy, which the disposal list formed part of. Councillor Stuart undertook to ensure the concerns raised were brought to the attention of members of Policy & Resources Committee on Wednesday.

As a supplementary Alison Roberts outlined the importance of the site to the overall high street and asked what the masterplan for Bromborough was and

how were residents being consulted. Councillor Stuart undertook to provide a written response.

Keith Marsh asked a question to Councillor Paul Stuart as Leader of the Council seeking reassurance and support for the Community Asset Transfer of Brackenwood Golf Club to Brackenwood Community Golf Ltd and calling for an extraordinary meeting of Policy & Resources to deal with the matter urgently.

In response, Councillor Stuart acknowledged the hard work of the volunteers and outlined his support in principle for Community Asset Transfers. He detailed the need for due diligence to be undertaken on the viability of any business plans to accompany a bid for an asset transfer and that this would take time meaning the item would be considered at the September meeting of Policy & Resources Committee.

Keith Marsh outlined the viability of the group's business plans and that negotiations with Council officers had been done hastily and urged the Council to consider the financial impact on the community group maintaining a Council asset.

## 22 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that no statements had been received.

The Civic Mayor further information the Council that one petition had been received from Kieran Gabriel calling on the Council to erect a statue of Paul O'Grady MBE DL and that Dave Humphreys was in attendance to present the petition.

Dave Humphreys spoke to the petition detailing the life of Paul O'Grady and the importance of Birkenhead to him and outlined the suitability of a permanent monument in Birkenhead to honour Paul O'Grady. Dave further reported that the petition had received over 200 thousand signatures nationally with extensive media coverage and lots of generous donations which would be provided to the Council should it decide to agree to the installation of a statue to honour Paul O'Grady.

## 23 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

The Civic Mayor announced that two questions by members had been received on notice.

The first question was from Councillor Phil Gilchrist to Councillor Liz Grey as Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in relation to the budget for replacement litter bins and seeking information on

the number of bins needing replacement and the number of replacements that were within budget.

In response, Councillor Grey outlined the cost of replacing bins and that there 4,500 bins in circulation, with 186 bins requirement replacement or removal and a budget that allowed 32 bins to be replaced. Councillor Grey further detailed the additional resources allocated to the programme following a review of the progress of addressing the backlog. Councillor Gilchrist expressed his desire for bins to be replaced sooner than 5 years which Councillor Grey shared.

The second question was from Councillor Chris Cooke to Councillor Andrew Hodson as Chair of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee which sought an update on a meeting held to consider the possibility of creating a new Charitable Trust to support discretionary and non-statutory Council services and seeking its inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting of the Regulatory and General Purposes Committee.

In response, Councillor Hodson outlined that as the matter related to financial contributions to the Council, this would be for Policy and Resources Committee to determine.

#### 24 **CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2022-23**

The first matter requiring approval was the proposed approval of the revised Capital Programme of £178.1m for 2023/24, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix D as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee on 14 June 2023.

On a motion moved by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

**Resolved (unanimously) – That the revised Capital Programme of £178.1m for 2023/24 be approved, including the virements of budget referred to in Appendix D.**

#### 25 **2022-23 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER FOUR (THE PERIOD TO 31 MAR), 2022-23 OUTTURN**

The second matter requiring approval was the transfer to and use of earmarked reserves, as detailed in Appendix 3 as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee on 14 June 2023.

On a motion moved by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jean Robinson, it was –

**Resolved (unanimously) – That the transfer to and use of earmarked reserves, as detailed in Appendix 3 be approved.**

## 26 DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Civic Mayor introduced the minutes of the various Committees which had met from 1 March 2023 to 16 June 2023 and asked for questions to Committee Chairs on any of the minutes being received.

Councillor Lesley Rennie asked a question to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in relation to minute item 67 of the meeting held on 14 March 2023. The question sought an update on the implementation of road safety measures at St George's Primary school and the installation of a vehicle activated speed warning following the change from 30mph to 20mph.

In response, Councillor Liz Grey indicated her support for this proposal and that she would raise it with officers.

Councillor Pat Cleary asked a question to the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in relation to minute item 63 of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 outlining concerns over the delivery of the regeneration programme and seeking an update on planned meetings of the Regeneration Working Group to ensure member oversight.

Councillor Tony Jones undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor Gary Bennett asked a question to the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in relation to minute item 61 of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 seeking an update on the assessment of the impact of cycle lanes, particularly the Fender Lane route in Moreton.

In response, Councillor Tony Jones outlined that those assessments were taking place and would be shared with members in due course.

Councillor Gary Bennett asked a question to the Chair of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee in relation to minute item 64 of the meeting held on 8 March 2023, asking the Chair to ensure that the items requested to be added to the Work Programme and agreed to be included by the Committee were reflected in the updated version.

In response, Councillor Tony Jones undertook to ensure that they were included in the latest version.

Councillor Phil Gilchrist asked a question to the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in relation to minute item 71 of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 seeking an update on the roads and

footways no longer in the schedule for maintenance and outlining the frustration of residents.

In response, Councillor Liz Grey outlined that following feedback from contractors a number of locations had changed but that she and the Committee Spokes were in discussion with the Director of Neighbourhood Services regarding these amendments and would keep Councillor Gilchrist informed.

Councillor Jo Bird asked a question to the Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee in relation to minute item 58 of the meeting held on 1 March 2023 seeking a date when the final auditors report would be published.

In response, Councillor Jenny Johnson undertook to provide the specific date for its publication.

Councillor Jeff Green asked a question to the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to minute item 6 of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 seeking a update regarding the ERP system including its total projected cost including staff time, when it was due to go live, when it was test and implemented and whether there would be a lessons learned evaluation that could be shared with members.

In response, Councillor Paul Stuart undertook to provide the information in writing.

## 27 **JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that no reports or questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

## 28 **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

Four motions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.1, and were determined as detailed in minutes 25 to 28.

## 29 **WIRRAL SUPPORTS FULL DEMOCRACY**

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

Following a debate, and Councillor Angie Davies having replied as mover of the motion, the motion was put to the vote and agreed (45:16) (1 abstention). It was therefore –

**Resolved (45:16) (1 abstention) – That**

**Following the 2022 Elections Act, voters must now show a document from a small list of photo identification for every general or parliamentary byelection across the UK, and for local elections in England.**

**The Electoral Commission recently published an interim analysis<sup>1</sup> into the roll out of Voter ID, that came into effect for England's local elections that happened in May of this year.**

**This analysis states that approximately 14,000 people were turned away from polling stations because they lacked the right ID to vote. [These elections excluded Scotland, Wales, London and Birmingham who did not have scheduled elections in May, so this figure is likely to increase].**

**In addition, the report said that a survey they ran reported that 4% of people who did not vote, specified it was because of the new voter ID requirements, Worryingly, this indicates that those denied a vote in future elections could be considerably higher and could run into the hundreds of thousands.**

**The study also warned of “concerning” signs that voters with disabilities, people who are not in employment and those from particular ethnic groups could be disproportionately affected by the policy.**

**In Wirral, just over half of the people turned away because they did not produce some valid ID, did not return to vote. This is not right in a democratic society. We want all our citizens to be easily able to exercise their democratic right to vote in all elections and not be excluded from having their say. No legitimate voter should be locked out democracy because of the Conservative government's disgraceful attempt at voter suppression and who are desperate to stop people from holding them to account by any means possible.**

**Council call upon the government to repeal Voter ID legislation in full and ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities to demand that this legislation is reversed to ensure that all Wirral citizens who are eligible to vote can fully participate in democracy.**

### **30 HELPING WIRRAL RESIDENTS WITH INFLATIONARY PRESSURES**

**Councillor Jeff Green moved and Councillor Lesley Rennie seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.**

**Councillor Liz Grey moved and Councillor Janette Williamson seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:**

*Insert after paragraph 1:*

‘at a time when they are struggling in the aftermath of the Truss/Kwarteng budget, which estimates wiping billions off the UK economy. Council also notes that this country has some of the least energy efficient homes in Europe and that had the Conservatives continued with the Labour Government’s retrofit policies instead of cutting them in 2013, UK Households would be warmer and richer.’

*Insert after first sentence in paragraph 2:*

‘by the government’s financial mismanagement.’

*In paragraph 3, delete ‘is a lifeline, including’ and replace with ‘includes’.*

*In the final paragraph, after “the relevant Chief Officer is requested to” insert “continue their hard work to”.*

Councillor Allan Brame moved and Councillor Phil Gilchrist seconded the following amendment, submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3:

*Insert after paragraph 1:*

Council recognises that the economic situation in this country has been made even more challenging as a result of the Conservative government’s calamitous Brexit deal and the financial chaos caused by the Truss administration’s disastrous mini-budget.

The Civic Mayor informed the Council that he intended to have a joint debate on the amendments due to the similar nature.

Following a debate, the amendment moved by Councillor Liz Grey and seconded by Councillor Janette Williamson was put to the vote and agreed (45:16) (1 abstention).

The amendment moved by Councillor Allan Brame and seconded Councillor Phil Gilchrist was also then put to the vote and agreed (45:16) (1 abstention).

The substantive motion, as amended, was then put to the vote and it was –

**Resolved (45:16) (1 abstention) – That**

**Council notes that the effects of worldwide inflationary pressures are putting additional strain on household budgets in the UK at a time when they are struggling in the aftermath of the Truss/Kwarteng budget, which estimates wiping billions off the UK economy.**

**Council recognises that the economic situation in this country has been made even more challenging as a result of the Conservative government's calamitous Brexit deal and the financial chaos caused by the Truss administration's disastrous mini-budget.**

**Council also notes that this country has some of the least energy efficient homes in Europe and that had the Conservatives continued with the Labour Government's retrofit policies instead of cutting them in 2013, UK Households would be warmer and richer.'**

**Council thanks those staff working with our vulnerable residents, along with the many voluntary, community and faith groups who are helping those most affected by the government's financial mismanagement.**

**For those households which are eligible, the help that has been made available by the UK Government includes:**

- **Energy bills support scheme**
- **Pensioner Cost of Living Payment**
- **Disability Cost of Living Payment**
- **Household Support Fund**

**Council therefore requests that, to ensure more of our residents are able to access the support available, the relevant Chief Officer is requested to continue their hard work to actively promote this support across all the Council's communication channels on a regular basis.**

## **31 GILL NETTING IN WIRRAL**

**Councillor Pat Cleary moved and Councillor Judith Grier seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.**

**Following a debate, and Councillor Pat Cleary having replied as mover of the motion, it was –**

**Resolved (unanimously) – That**

**Council notes the harmful effects of the use of gill nets upon fishing populations and other marine life, especially Porpoises and fish-eating birds such as Grebes and Divers.**

**Council acknowledges how nets are left unattended, suspended in the water over the tide and work by entangling fish by the gills as they try and reverse out of a net they cannot pass through. Because gill nets are non-selective they can catch and kill a wide variety of fish, including young fish, fish of protected species, and non-target species. Discarded bycatch is a common site on Wirral's beaches and has recently been commented on by visitors to Wirral's beaches.**

**Council notes how other authorities such as Cornwall Council, Devon County Council and Northumberland County Council have banned gill netting as part of a wider trend towards the phasing out of gill netting and supports the introduction of a bylaw in consultation with the Fisheries Authorities.**

**Furthermore, Council notes that permits currently issued by the Council to facilitate vehicular access enables equipment such as gill nets to be brought on to our beaches.**

**Council therefore requests that**

- 1. The Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee writes to the Chief Executive Officer for North West Inshore Fisheries and to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that the matter be reviewed as a matter of urgency; and**
- 2. The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee reviews council permits for vehicular access to Wirral's beaches with a view to specifically excluding the transport of gill nets and gill net trapped fish.**

## **32 CALL FOR BANKING HUBS**

**Councillor Phil Gilchrist moved and Councillor Allan Brame seconded a motion submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.**

**Following a debate, and Councillor Phil Gilchrist having replied as mover of the motion, it was –**

**Resolved (unanimously) – That**

**Council recalls that in October 2022 a motion was considered proposed by Councillor Gilchrist and seconded by Councillor Mitchell, with the title 'Bank and cash services that meet local needs'.**

**Council supported this motion and, as a result, officers made enquiries of the Link organisation on how access to cash machines could be maintained.**

**Council recognises that the closure of bank branches has continued with the loss of the HSBC in Bromborough this July. The closure of Lloyds in Prenton is now planned to take place in October. The withdrawal of branches appears to be endless as branches are singled out for closure.**

**Council appreciates that Post Offices can offer services for depositing cash by arrangement with the banking sector and the Link organisation and that transactions can be made through on line banking and by telephone.**

**However, Council remains concerned that there is inadequate distribution of post office services to fulfil these functions. There remains a need for residents to obtain financial advice and have face to face discussions with representatives of the banks. Council believes that it is in the best interests of Wirral's people for 'banking hubs' to be developed in Wirral.**

**Council requests that the Director of Finance writes to the Link organisation and to the banking sector to secure their development.**