

Council – 18 March 2024

Motions

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. Household Support Fund

Proposed by Councillor Phil Gilchrist
Seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia

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 further notes the speculation and uncertainty over the future of the funding affects the organisations and all of 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.

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 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
2. 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.

1. <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50109179/Appendix%201%20Household%20Support%20Fund%20Winter%20Allocation.pdf>
 2. <https://www.sigoma.gov.uk/news/2024/sigoma-calls-for-the-continuation-of-the-household-support-fund>
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2. Freedom of the borough request for Mr David Armstrong

**Proposed by Councillor Angie Davies
Seconded by Councillor Paul Stuart**

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.

3. Reopen our Post Offices

Proposed by Councillor Jenny Johnson

Seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie

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.

4. Immediate bilateral long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza

Proposed by Councillor Jo Bird
Seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary

Wirral Council acknowledges:

1. people who live in Wirral have close family members killed, seriously injured or held hostage by Israel's collective punishment of the people of Gaza or by Hamas. For example, Islam Alashi a Wirral resident and Teacher ¹;
2. repeated representations by local trade union branches including Unison and Unite, members of Merseyside Pension Fund and local residents demonstrate that they do not wish their pensions to be invested in companies that facilitate military operations in Gaza²;
3. As of 29 September 2023, Merseyside Pension Fund had over £17 million of investments in the following companies;

Merseyside Pension Fund investments

£ 8,880,605 BAE Systems
£ 2,959,013 Honeywell
£ 2,004,166 Chemring
£ 905,610 General Dynamics
£ 757,459 Textron
£ 628,508 RTX (Raytheon Tech)
£ 292,017 Lockheed Martin
£ 206,876 Teledyne
£ 159,061 Northrop Grumman
£ 122,598 Caterpillar
£ 50,078 L3Harris
£ 44,240 General Electric
£ 18,849 Boeing

Total £17,029,080 in at least 13 companies ³⁴⁵⁶⁷

4. Council tax and business rates paid in Wirral help to fund investments in these companies via Merseyside Pension Fund;
5. over 30,000 men, women and children killed in Gaza and Israel since 7 October 2023 and the widespread condemnation of the organisations that have claimed responsibility⁸;
6. the world's militaries are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions⁹;
7. the United Nations International Court of Justice order on 26 January 2024 stated that Israel must stop killing Palestinians in Gaza¹⁰;
8. United Nations panel of human rights experts on 23 February 2024 stated that arms exports to Israel must stop immediately¹¹; and
9. Local government pension funds and governments in the UK imposed arms and political sanctions against Russia for invading Ukraine¹².

Therefore Wirral Council requests:

1. that Group Leaders write to the Prime Minister calling on him to support an immediate, bilateral, long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza; and
2. the Director of Pensions at Merseyside Pension Fund submit a report to Members of the Pensions Committee as soon as practically possible to:
 - provide 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;
 - outline the engagement history by the fund or its partners with these companies; and
 - explain how the fund's Responsible Investment Policy should be applied to these companies with a view to potential divestment.

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-67457924>

²<https://www.wirralglobe.co.uk/news/23984346.working-group-set-look-wirral-councils-pension-investments/>

³<https://mpfmembers.org.uk/equities>

⁴<http://labournet.net/other/2312/pensions1.html>

⁵https://www.airframer.com/aircraft_detail.html?model=F-35_JSJF#5

⁶<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/2/israel-to-buy-new-fleet-of-f-35-fighter-jets-financed-by-us-aid>

⁷<https://www.politico.eu/article/court-orders-dutch-stop-shipping-f-35-israel-gaza/>

⁸<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

⁹<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-03444-7>

¹⁰<https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203447>

¹¹<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/arms-exports-israel-must-stop-immediately-un-experts>

¹²<https://www.cardiffandvalepensionfund.org.uk/2022/03/statement-from-the-wales-pension-partnership-and-the-lgps-in-wales/>
