

Council – 18 March 2024

Amendments to Motions on Notice as Amended

The Council is requested to consider the following amendments submitted in accordance with Standing Order 13.3

Proposed Labour Group amendment to Liberal Democrat Motion

Motion 1. Household Support Fund

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

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 regrets that the Government considers that the existing fund should only be extended for six months.

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

In view of this the approach of the Local Government Association should be endorsed and supported, namely that the Government 'needs to use the next six months to agree a more sustainable successor to the Household Support Fund'.

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 contacts the Local Government Association with a view to establishing how following their approach will assist Wirral and the interests of communities with similar needs.*

2. 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
 3. 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.
-

Proposed Conservative Group amendment to Liberal Democrat Motion

Motion 1. Household support fund

Proposed by Councillor: Jeff Green

Seconded by Councillor: Jenny Johnson

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 welcomes the additional £500 million announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Spring Budget to enable the extension of the Household Support Fund in England from April to September 2024, in order to continue providing targeted support to vulnerable households with the cost of essentials such as food and utilities and notes, to date, Wirral Council has received £15,246,725.46 in Household Support Fund payments to support our most vulnerable residents.

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.
-

Proposed Labour Group Amendment to Conservative Group Motion

Motion 3. Re-open our post offices.

**Proposed by Councillor Brian Kenny
Seconded by Councillor Ann Ainsworth**

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.

During the peak of the Post Office scandal between 2010 and 2012, Sir Ed Davey, the Postal Affairs Minister, declined to engage with postmaster Alan Bates, the leader of the justice campaign.

Council recognises that the 2010 Coalition government and the subsequent Conservative administrations neglected to address the scandal.

Councils condemn the Post Office for deceiving government Ministers over time and for failing the numerous sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses nationwide, including those in Wirral, who were unjustly prosecuted.

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.

'Council further requests that the Leader to write to the cabinet minister requesting the Elizabeth Emblem be considered for individuals who were wrongly convicted but have since passed away without receiving justice.'

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-67892045.amp>

Proposed Liberal Democrat amendment to the Green Group motion.

Motion 4. Immediate bilateral long-lasting ceasefire in Gaza

**Proposed by Councillor Allan Brame
Seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist**

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 Gaza¹;
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 responsibility¹;
6. the world's militaries are significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions¹;
7. the United Nations International Court of Justice order on 26 January 2024 stated that Israel must stop killing Palestinians in Gaza¹;
8. United Nations panel of human rights experts on 23 February 2024 stated that arms exports to Israel must stop immediately¹; and
9. Local government pension funds and governments in the UK imposed arms and political sanctions against Russia for invading Ukraine¹.

Therefore Wirral Council requests:

1. that Group Leaders write to the Prime Minister calling on him to support an *effective and long term humanitarian* ceasefire in Gaza; and
2. the Director of Pensions at Merseyside Pension Fund submit an *initial* report to Members of the Pensions Committee *for their consideration* as soon as practically possible to *outline the feasibility and potential impact of disinvestment by:*
 - provid*ing*-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;

- outlining the engagement history by the fund or its partners with these companies; and
- clarifying how the fund's Responsible Investment Policy should be applied to these companies.

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 JSF#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/>
