

The following motion has been submitted in accordance with Standing Order No.6:

**Proposer:** Councillor Dave Thompson

**Seconded:** Councillor Tom McInerney

### **Water service charges**

Council resolves:

- 1) To write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs expressing the concern of Council at both current charges and proposed further water service charges affecting Halton Council.
- 2) Council asks the Secretary of State to note that surface water highway drainage charges applied by United Utilities to local authorities are already charged at the highest rates in England and Wales. Her attention is drawn to United Utilities proposing to phase-in new and further charges for Council premises and open spaces from April 2016 at a time when this Council has sustained prolonged and unprecedented reductions in budget.
- 3) The Secretary of State is asked to note the significant difference between what Council's within the United Utilities region are charged and what level of water service charges are applied to local authorities by all other water and sewerage companies in other regions.

The following examples are noted:

- This Council pays £13,168 a year, through site area charges on premises that United Utilities class as Band 7, yet the same charging method used in Yorkshire Water would result in a charge of just £377. The higher the charging band the greater the disproportionate level of charging there is between what United Utilities apply to this Council and that charged in other regions.
- Department for Education CFR data shows that in 2012/13, schools in the North West region paid a total of £27 million for water/sewerage, whereas schools in the South East paid £11 million. Both regions roughly have similar numbers of schools and pupils yet an extra £16 million of added charges are applied in our region.
- Halton pays £37.78 in water charges per school child, the comparative costs in the Windsor and Maidenhead LEA area are just £10.22. Both areas have similar numbers of schools and pupils, yet Halton is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> highest nationally and Windsor has one of the lowest charges in England & Wales.
- United Utilities have indicated intent to phase in added charges to the six Greater Merseyside local authorities of £2,430,000 from April 2016. No other district outside the North West will face such extensive additional charging.

- 4) Council calls upon the Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to commission an independent review of the differing scale of charges facing public sector services for water and sewerage services, similar in scope to the 2009 Walker Review of household charging.

She is asked to revise guidance on concessionary schemes that relate to section 43 of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 to make clear that community assets managed by local authorities can be included within a concessionary scheme.