

Local Government Democratic Reform – Motion dealt with, after division.

10 Councillor Dr Christopher Mason, seconded by Councillor Coleshill, moved that

“The Council acknowledges that the political system in the United Kingdom is now in urgent need of democratic reform and pledges itself to campaign for the constitutional entrenchment of democratic local government as an integral part of the reform process.

In particular the Council will campaign for the adoption in Scotland of

- (1) measures to enhance the accountability of local authorities to the people who elect them rather than to centralised regulatory authorities;
- (2) statutory limits on the power of the Scottish Government and Parliament to transfer local government functions to central government or QUANGOs; and
- (3) local authorities to be granted fiscal power that is roughly equivalent to their spending responsibilities as part of a UK wide federalist re-allocation of fiscal power between the United Kingdom Parliament and national and regional assemblies.”

Bailie McFadden, seconded by Councillor Curran, moved as an amendment that

“This Council agrees to campaign for the constitutional entrenchment of democratic local government as an integral part of the reform process.

In particular the Council will campaign for the adoption in Scotland of

- (1) measures to enhance the accountability of local authorities to the people who elect them rather than to centralised regulatory authorities;
- (2) statutory limits on the power of the Scottish Government and Parliament to transfer local government functions to central government or QUANGOs; and
- (3) a power of general competence for Scottish Local Authorities.”

Councillor Wardrop, seconded by Councillor Clay, moved as a further amendment that

“The Council acknowledges that the political system in the United Kingdom is now in urgent need of democratic reform and pledges itself to campaign for the constitutional entrenchment of democratic local government as an integral part of the reform process.

In particular the Council will campaign for the adoption in Scotland of

- (1) measures to enhance the accountability of local authorities to the people who elect them rather than to centralised regulatory authorities;
- (2) local government functions to be strengthened, with active community councils, working in cooperation with the Scottish Parliament and Westminster Parliament. The legal framework of the Scottish Parliament should be governed by and enshrined within a written Constitution and Bill of Rights;
- (3) local authorities to be granted greater fiscal power to raise a greater proportion of overall taxation revenues locally. Land value taxation is supported as the preferred mechanism for raising local government revenue. Recognition provided to local authorities which are structurally disadvantaged or face unique problems in a way which require additional central redistribution. Such redistribution should be aimed at redressing structural imbalances (eg in terms of transport infrastructure) or addressing specific local or regional challenges; and
- (4) democratic reform with the use of Proportional Representation for all elections.”

Councillor James Dornan, seconded by Councillor Thoms, moved as a further amendment that

“Council recognises that the political system in the United Kingdom is not fit for purpose and regrets that the Liberal Democrats are willing to use this outmoded system to shore up a minority party which represents just one constituency in Scotland.

Council regrets the inability and apparent unwillingness of Labour MPs to enter into a progressive coalition and stop the return to power of the Conservatives; fears that the Emergency Budget to be held within 50 days time will introduce drastic cuts to Scotland’s public and local services, especially funding for schools, hospitals and infrastructure; and states clearly that the Tory/Lib Dem coalition at Westminster has no mandate to govern Scotland with only 20% of MPs and a third of the popular vote.”

On a vote being taken electronically, 19 members voted for the amendment by Councillor James Dornan, 5 for the amendment by Councillor Wardrop, 42 for the amendment by Bailie McFadden and 7 for the motion.

The amendment by Bailie McFadden was accordingly declared to be carried.