

Council: Tuesday, 1 November 2011

Opposition Business Item – 3.2: Councillor Alison Moore

Barnet's local economy

Council notes that the economy is in a desperate state, with CPI inflation the highest since the measure was introduced, unemployment now at a 17 year high of 2.57 million, youth unemployment at a record high, weak economic growth and squeezed household budgets.

Council also notes that consumer confidence is at an all time low according to a new survey, and that the Business Secretary has now admitted the possibility of a double dip recession.

Council further notes that the Conservative-led coalition government does not seem to have any plan for growth in the economy, and that locally residents are being hit by inflation busting parking charge increases of up to 300 per cent, inflation busting fare increases for the fourth year running, and increasingly unaffordable housing costs, particularly for private sector rents – all as a result of Conservative policies, whether national, regional or local.

Council believes that LB Barnet should be doing everything it can to help support local residents and traders in these difficult times, and asks that Cabinet consider what measures it can put in place to help Barnet's local economy, to help revive and sustain our local Town Centres, and to help our hard-pressed residents.

As part of this, Council asks Cabinet to:

- agree a commitment that local Council jobs stay local, and are not outsourced out of the Borough under One Barnet 'easyCouncil' plans.
- develop a Retail Diversity Scheme, to help give communities a real say in developing a strategy for retail growth in their area, promote town centre retailing over out of town development, and promote diversity of retail provision including a balance between large and small stores, specialists, chains and discounters.
- review the recent parking charge increases introduced this year.
- work with credit unions to develop an alternative form of credit to pay-day loans, and investigate regulatory compliance among pawn-broking, gold-buying and pay-day loan companies.
- bring forward meaningful measures to help residents combat fuel poverty.
- work with private sector landlords to keep rents affordable, and identify tenants at risk from increasing rents in order to help prevent evictions

Council also asks Cabinet to:

- lobby the government to, at least, temporarily reverse their VAT rise to 17.5% to give families with children a £450 boost.
- lobby the government to cut VAT on home improvements to 5% for a year.
- lobby the government to give local small businesses a tax break to take on extra workers.