

Council: Tuesday, 21 January 2014

Administration Business Item: Councillor Daniel Thomas

Amendment in the name of Councillor Ross Houston

Helping residents with the cost of living

First Paragraph:

- Delete “and welcomes the significant uplift in the economy, with...”
- Add “in the economy” after “1.5%”
- Add “but that since 2010 growth is much slower than expected and the Government’s pledge to balance the books by 2015 is set to be broken” after “2014”.
- Delete last two sentences of paragraph.

Add:

“Council notes that prices are still rising almost twice as fast as wages, average earnings for working people in London are £3804 a year lower in real terms than in May 2010, fares in London are now the most expensive in the world, since the election of Mayor Boris Johnson the cost of a single bus journey has increased by 61% and the cost of a 1-4 zone travelcard has gone up by £416, child care costs are up 30% under David Cameron, energy bills have risen by almost £300 for families and businesses say it’s the second biggest cost they face, and private rents in Barnet are now the most expensive in outer-London.

Second Paragraph:

- Delete second paragraph

Add:

“Council believes that for most people this is no recovery at all, and that action must be taken to help those struggling with the cost of living crisis.”

Third Paragraph:

- Delete “welcomes” in first sentence and replace with “accepts”.

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Add at end of first sentence;

“but notes that this cut represents less than 27p per week for the average household, and will not help people cope with rising housing, child care, energy and transport costs.”

- Delete second and third sentences.

Add:

“Council notes that the value of the free parking permit the Conservative councillors give themselves is worth significantly more than the council tax discount they are offering residents. Labour would scrap this parking permit perk, if residents have to pay for their parking so should Conservative councillors.”

Fourth paragraph:

Add at the end of the 1st sentence:

“but regrets that, despite Labour calling for it, the Conservative administration did not show leadership on the issue and joined the scheme late which meant that Barnet residents lost out.”

- Delete 3rd sentence and 5th Paragraph.

Add

“Council notes, however, that the Conservative government has failed to sign-up to Labour’s pledge to freeze energy bills for two years to help struggling families.”

Sixth Paragraph:

- Delete first sentence.

- Add

“Council notes that social rent rises have been kept below inflation, but is concerned that Mayor Boris Johnson is seeking to increase social rents to a so-called “affordable rent” of 80% of market rates which will make social rents in Barnet as unaffordable as private rents. Council calls on the Barnet Conservatives to oppose this policy change.

- In second sentence delete “the Borough’s first” and “in twenty years” and add “only 3... in Barnet”.
- In second sentence delete “the fact that there is increasing affordable home provision through the council’s many developments and regeneration projects” and add “that not enough affordable housing has been built to meet the needs of local residents.”

Final Paragraph:

- Delete “continue to” and “extending these schemes and policies” and add “building more affordable homes, opposing any move to increase social rents to 80% of market rates, lobbying the Mayor of London to drop his fares increases, and lobbying Government to implement Labour’s policies of freezing energy bills for two years and extending childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds from 15 to 25 hours per week (funded by an increase in the bank levy rate).”

Substantive Business Item to read:

Council notes growth of 1.5% in the economy achieved between March and September of 2013 and the Treasury forecasting growth in GDP of 2.5% for 2014, but that since 2010 growth is much slower than expected and the Government's pledge to balance the books by 2015 is set to be broken.

Council notes that prices are still rising almost twice as fast as wages, average earnings for working people in London are £3804 a year lower in real terms than in May 2010, fares in London are now the most expensive in the world, since the election of Mayor Boris Johnson the cost of a single bus journey has increased by 61% and the cost of a 1-4 zone travelcard has gone up by £416, child care costs are up 30% under David Cameron, energy bills have risen by almost £300 for families and businesses say it's the second biggest cost they face, and private rents in Barnet are now the most expensive in outer-London.

Council believes that for most people this is no recovery at all, and that action must be taken to help those struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Council accepts the announced 1% council tax cut for Barnet's households this year and the fact that it succeeds a four year freeze, but notes that this cut represents less than 27p per week for the average household, and will not help people cope with rising housing, child care, energy and transport costs. Council notes that the value of the free parking permit the Conservative councillors give themselves is worth significantly more than the council tax discount they are offering residents. Labour would scrap this parking permit perk, if residents have to pay for their parking so should Conservative councillors.

Council notes the Borough's involvement with the Big London Energy Switch, which is already helping people to reduce their fuel bills by an average of £200, but regrets that, despite Labour calling for it, the Conservative administration did not show leadership on the issue and joined the scheme late which meant that Barnet residents lost out. Council welcomes the decision to extend this scheme and calls on the Cabinet to continue to promote ways to help people achieve the best market rates. Council notes, however, that the Conservative government has failed to sign-up to Labour's pledge to freeze energy bills for two years to help struggling families.

Council notes that social rent rises have been kept below inflation, but is concerned that Mayor Boris Johnson is seeking to increase social rents to a so-called "affordable rent" of 80% of market rates which will make social rents in Barnet as unaffordable as private rents. Council calls on the Barnet Conservatives to oppose this policy change.

Council notes the building of only 3 council houses in Barnet and that not enough affordable housing has been built to meet the needs of local residents.

Council calls on the Cabinet to support the hard working residents of the Borough with the cost of living by building more affordable homes, opposing any move to increase social rents to 80% of market rates, lobbying the Mayor of London to drop his fares increases, and lobbying Government to implement Labour's policies of freezing energy bills for two years and extending childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds from 15 to 25 hours per week (funded by an increase in the bank levy rate).