

Council meeting, 1 November 2022

Administration Motion in the name of Cllr Simon Radford

Impact of the mini-budget on the cost-of-living crisis

Council notes:

1. The disastrous lasting impact of the Government's 'mini-budget' on the markets, inflation, interest rates, the economy, and the cost-of-living crisis.
2. The sacking of the Chancellor of the Exchequer after only 38 days and the reversal of the 'mini-budget' following the financial turmoil.
3. The decisions of "eye-watering difficulty" that the new Chancellor has said are now required, including brutal real terms cuts to public services to repair the destruction caused by the ill-advised 'mini-budget'.
4. The detrimental impact the inevitable cuts are likely to have on frontline public services that are already experiencing a funding and recruitment/retention/pay crisis.
5. The devastating consequential impact this will have on the users of these services in Barnet and on the Council's ability to respond to support the growing number of people in need.

Council also notes that:

1. Many people in Barnet are already struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, with around 9,500 families known to have debts to the Council of more than £1,000.
2. There will be more people with other debts not known to the Council, meaning the total number of households in Barnet in need of support is in fact much higher.
3. LB Barnet's new administration is doing all it can to help, and has agreed a package of support totalling £9m for those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis including:
 - a. Launching a cost-of-living hub and a public awareness campaign to support residents by giving them quick access to advice, information and financial support
 - b. Setting up a £2m Residents' Support Fund to provide financial support to residents in crisis (equivalent to 1% of council tax)
 - c. Agreeing to refund this year's 1% Council Tax increase in 2023/24 to keep bills lower next year
 - d. Providing additional funding to the cross-sector partnership, Barnet Together Alliance, who are doing so much good work to support our communities
 - e. Providing other targeted interventions to mitigate food and fuel poverty challenges to our residents.

However, Council believes that this will not be sufficient to help all those in need as the cost-of-living crisis continues into next year.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Ask the Leader of the Council to urgently write to the Prime Minister outlining:
 - i. The strain that the Government's poor political choices has placed on the local economy and the residents of Barnet.
 - ii. The need for more help from the Government to support those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis through the winter and beyond, including ensuring ongoing support for energy bills and that benefits are uprated by inflation not earnings.
 - iii. The need to protect frontline public services from further cuts and provide sufficient funding to local councils as set out in the London Councils Key Priorities document, including funding to help us insulate and retrofit homes and reach our Net Zero targets.
2. Ask Barnet's three Conservative MPs to also write to the Government in support of these needs, and to seek assurances that the Prime Minister's comments made about the 'North London anti-growth coalition' doesn't lead to further levelling-down in Barnet and London.