

Council 30th January 2024

Administration motion in the name of Councillor Phil Cohen

Putting Barnet First in the Face of Conservative Cuts

Barnet Council notes:

- The latest Local Government Settlement, stating what funding the Conservative government is willing to share with local government, outlines a £406 million cut to the Services Grant for local government.
- That this cut is due to be implemented despite higher-than-expected tax revenues. These higher-than-expected revenues are due to the inflation that followed the Conservative Government's November 2022 budget pulling residents into higher tax bands, causing billions of pounds in additional taxes being levied on individuals.
- That the Government's calculations for how it expects local governments will deliver services to their residents assumes that local authorities will introduce the maximum increase in council tax allowed without holding a local referendum; and that that represents another attack on household finances as families face remortgaging rates which rocketed during the Liz Truss Premiership.
- That there are also freezes to the new Homes Bonus and the Improved Better Care Fund, at a time of significant inflation.
- That Barnet Council has faced real terms cuts of more than £100 million from the Conservative Government since 2010.
- That the Local Government Association estimate that councils will face £4 billion shortfall by March 2025 on Conservative ministers' current plans.
- That the Leader of the Local Government Association, Shaun Davies, described the Government Local government settlement as 'unthinkable' and that "No council is now immune to the growing risk to their financial sustainability.
- That Cllr Barry Lewis, Finance lead for the County Council Network and Conservative Leader of Derbyshire County Council said that the Government's decision on local Government funding was 'bitterly disappointing' and that 'councils will have no choice but to implement more severe reductions to services.'
- The Conservative Leader of Surrey County Council, Tim Oliver, has described the latest Government local Government settlement as 'worse than austerity'.
- That Brent Conservatives joined with Brent Liberal Democrats, joined with the Brent Labour administration in stating that the latest settlement will 'do little to address the pressures than council are facing' and how 'disappointed' they are that the Government have 'failed to refer to the long-standing concerns made by local authorities concerning the surety of long-term funding or the immediate impact of historically high inflation rates.'
- That Brent Conservatives, alongside their Labour and Liberal Democrat colleagues, called on the Government to review its Local Government funding settlements as the result of its current policy are 'deep cuts to council services [that] are only likely to place pressure on other areas of public spending, such as the NHS, which are already in crisis.

Council resolves to:

- That the Leader should write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking for a review of the Local Government Settlement, and that he should ask if the leader of the Conservative Group will co-sign.