



Council
19 July 2022

WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Ward(s) Affected: All

Motion on Notice

Report by the Interim Director for Communities

Executive Summary

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The report before Council sets out a motion received from Councillor Carl Walker.
- 1.2. Council is asked to deal with the motion under provisions set out in paragraph 14 of the Council Procedure Rules (under part 4 of the Council Constitution - Rules of Procedure).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Council is asked to determine the motion as set out in Annex A to this report.

3. Context

- 3.1 A motion on notice has been received from Councillor Carl Walker, (attached as Annex A).
- 3.2 The content of the motion is relevant to a matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties and which affects the Borough.

3.3 There is nothing substantive within the motion that would cause its rejection under the terms of the Constitution.

3.4 The motion before Council is declaratory in nature, as defined in para 14.4.4 of the Council's Procedure Rules. Therefore, it may be considered and debated by the Full Council without being automatically referred to a future meeting, as defined in para 14.4.5 of the Council's Procedure Rules, or, being referred to the Executive or Committee without debate, as defined in paragraphs 14.4.1, 14.4.2 and 14.4.3 of the Council's Procedure Rules.

4. Issues for consideration

4.1 Motions considered by Full Council are done so under part 14 of the Council's Procedure Rules and are debated under rules set out under part 16 of the Council procedure rules and the Council is asked to debate the motion under these rules accordingly.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The motion is declaratory in nature and therefore there are no direct financial implications.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 As the motion is declaratory in nature, there are no direct legal implications arising from it.

Background Papers

None

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Motion- Worthing Borough Council Cost of Living Emergency

Proposer- Cllr Carl Walker

Seconder- Cllr Emma Taylor

Recently, the End Child Poverty coalition predicted that almost a quarter of children in Worthing live in poverty. Statistics from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee suggest 11.5% of the UK population live in food insecurity. This is estimated to be around 12,000 Worthing residents. As a result of a range of recent political and economic factors, citizens in Worthing are now facing a further unprecedented Cost of Living crisis. This is so serious that it should be treated as an emergency. The evidence for this Cost of Living Crisis is as follows-

- The energy price cap rose by 54% from April 1, affecting around 22 million people nationally and will now mean that an average household will pay £1,971 a year for gas and electricity, at the same time that council tax, water bills and car tax are all increasing. In October, a further rise is expected; pushing the annual energy bill up to £2,300. People paying default tariffs by direct debit will see an increase of £693 from £1,277 to £1,971 per year, while prepayment customers will see an increase of £708 from £1,309 to £2,017.
- Food prices have increased, since 2010, by 27 per cent and childcare costs by 50 per cent.
- Inflation of more than 8%, the highest level of inflation for nearly 30 years, and the government's failure to deal with the cost of living crisis for the poorest people – an unemployed single person will see a 15% drop in income – will put an extra 1.3 million people, including 500,000 children, below the poverty line. Higher inflation is also harder for poorer households to deal with, as they have less flexibility in their budgets to cope with higher prices on essentials, and fewer savings to fall back on when prices are high.
- Most benefits, including the State Pension, are set to be uprated by 3.1 per cent in April 2022 at a time when the cost of living could be rising by more than 8 per cent. Over 2022-23 as a whole, the value of most benefits may fall by 4.2 per cent in real terms.
- Absolute poverty has been projected to rise to 18 per cent in 2022-23. The prevalence of absolute child poverty is projected to be higher in 2026-27 than

in 2019-20, with a very large rise of 5 percentage points expected between 2020-21 and 2022-23.

- Wage growth has been stagnant for 15 years, with the average person losing £1,000 in real terms in 2022 alone. Real wages fell by 0.6 per cent in Q4 of 2021. We can be confident that real earnings will be falling in 2022-23, but the scale of the hit is highly uncertain.
- Private renters have seen annual rents up £2,000 since 2010. Housing costs are also set to rise materially, but on different timescales for different tenures. High inflation will swiftly feed through into higher rents in the social sector.
- A YouGov poll of 2,001 people commissioned by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) found 55% felt their health had worsened owing to issues such as higher heating and food costs. One in four of these people had been told this was the case by a doctor or other medical professional, with stress seen as a driving factor of ill-health.

It is clear that-

- inadequate income is pervasive and it is hurting our children and their parents long-term. It is undermining the meaning of democracy and it can't ever be resolved by food parcels or philanthropy, or even through legalising a right to food, however well-intentioned.
- in a wealthy economy citizens should be able to afford to house, clothe and feed themselves and their children and be able to live a reasonable quality of life.
- the essentials of life include whatever is necessary to take your place in public without shame. This is about having agency, a sense of self-worth, and participating in networks of family and friends. Lack of income threatens these fundamental components of living in society, and damages mental and physical health. One way to deprive people of the opportunity to lead dignified lives is to take away the means to meet their material needs.
- locally we are seeing health and care staff struggling to afford fuel to get to work, which will only add to the staffing crisis.
- poverty disproportionately affects women, those with disabilities and members of minoritised communities.

This is the right moment for us to acknowledge that this particular equalities issue, one with no formalised protection within equalities law and much-neglected within equalities-related dialogue and debate, is in fact at a point of emergency.

This Council resolves to:

- Declare a Cost of Living Emergency and recommend that a Cost of Living Emergency strategy be developed and submitted to the Council for approval, which takes a collaborative and evidence-based approach, working more closely with health, trade unions, further education facilities and community groups.
- Ensure that work on the Cost of Living Emergency strategy informs and sits alongside all other work streams within the council's (and partners) economic and other recovery planning. Specifically, the Cost of Living Emergency workstream sits alongside the Climate Emergency Declaration workstream.
- Draw on best practice in Cost of Living reduction initiatives around the UK to influence poverty reduction policy and practice in Worthing.
- Acknowledge that rising levels of poverty means that the estimated 12,000 Worthing residents living in food insecurity in 2022 will increase as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- Acknowledge that the stress of being poor and in crisis has a detrimental impact on health, including mental health and wellbeing, achievement, life chances, participation, resilience and social cohesion.
- Recognise socio-economic deprivation as an equalities issue.
- Follow the Big Issue's campaign to Stop Mass Homelessness and write to the relevant Secretaries of State asking them to keep people in their homes and in sustainable jobs, including committing to pay off the £360m in rent arrears; and suspending no fault evictions until a Renters' Reform Act is passed.
- Urge the Government to act immediately to tackle the cost of living crisis by:
 - ensuring that those with the broadest shoulders contribute more;
 - introducing a UK wide Cost of Living Emergency strategy to urgently improve the value of support provided to low income households

through the social security system, including making permanent the £20 Universal Credit uplift introduced at the start of the pandemic;

- supporting a Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requiring public bodies to consider how decisions made now affect future needs, and tackle persistent problems such as poverty, homelessness, health inequalities and climate change;
- scrapping VAT on domestic energy bills and cut duty on home heating oil, petrol and diesel, for the duration of the energy crisis;
- reversing the planned increase in National Insurance Contributions;
- revisiting the default policy that Local Housing Allowances are now permanently frozen – regardless of increasing rents; and adjust the benefit cap, which is also frozen. It is important to stop making further real-terms cuts;
- urgently reforming UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies;
- providing kickstart funding and support to low income communities in establishing cooperative models of ownership.

Note for anyone reading this-

If you are experiencing feelings of distress and isolation, or are struggling to cope, The Samaritans offers support; you can speak to someone for free over the phone, in confidence, on 116 123 (UK and ROI), or, visit the Samaritans website to find details of your nearest branch.