

Motion to: Council

15 March 2022

Subject: The cost-of-living crisis in Norwich

Proposer: Councillor Huntley

Seconded: Councillor Waters

An amendment from **Councillor Osborn** has been received.

Councillor Osborn is amending the motion as follows:-

Inserting the words “**especially in the energy efficiency sector and wages for the poorest**” after the words “**low growth**” in resolution 1a).

Inserting the words “**including locally in Norwich through a retrofit taskforce**” after the words “**insulate homes**” in resolution 2a).

Inserting the words “**and a Universal Basic Income**” after the words “**for all regardless of age**” in resolution 2a).

So that the revised motion becomes:-

Norwich households are bracing themselves for the biggest drop in living standards in thirty years with a cost-of-living crisis including steep price increases in everyday and essential food items, tax hikes, low growth, falling real wages, and a failure to tackle the energy crisis. Failure of Coalition and Conservative-led governments have left Britain uniquely exposed to a global gas crisis and systemic failure to create an inclusive, sustainable economic model will leave Norwich residents further disadvantaged in the months ahead.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

1) Note that:

- a) The decade of low growth, especially in the energy efficiency sector and wages for the poorest, under Conservative-led governments and believes that this is holding back our local and national economy, weakening it and making it unable to deal with shocks.
- b) That the pandemic has further highlighted the significant health, wellbeing, and the economic inequalities in our city and that the increase in the cost of living will impact on most residents in Norwich. Those on the lowest incomes will be hardest hit as incomes are squeezed by inflation, the £1,040 per year reduction to universal credit, the rise in National Insurance

contributions for low and middle income workers, increases in council tax, the freezing of the personal income tax allowance from April, the increasing cost of household energy bills, the highest petrol prices since 2013, increased rail fares, the fastest rise in private rental prices since 2008, successive above inflation increases in childcare costs, and rising prices resulting from the supply chain disruption caused by worker and supply shortages.

- c) Eligibility for Free School Meal Vouchers in Norwich is increasing, indicating that poverty in the city is increasing, and council hardship funds are coming under ever increasing pressure. The National Food Strategy was a wasted opportunity to tackle this issue, but the plan lacks a clear vision and strategy on how to improve the crisis and that opportunities to set out legal ways to enforce the strategy have been missed and need to be enshrined in law.

2) to ask

- a) the Leader to write to the relevant Secretary's of State to request government support measures that would immediately cut VAT on domestic energy bills to ease the burden on households during winter – (giving a potential saving of up to £400 for many Norwich residents) – which would be paid for by a one-off windfall tax on booming oil and gas profits; believes that we need long-term change to keep energy bills low in the future and that a radical Green New Deal to insulate homes, including locally in Norwich through a retrofit taskforce, improve energy efficiency and develop a long-term energy strategy to secure network resilience is vital. This must be combined with an immediate uplift in Universal Credit and its future replacement with a new compassionate social security system that is designed to support everyone when they need it, together with a Real Living Wage for all regardless of age and a Universal Basic Income. In particular, government should immediately increase the local housing allowance, cap rents in the private rented sector, abolish the Bedroom Tax, increase Working Tax Credits, remove differential pay rates for young people on the Government's National Minimum Wage and improve employment rights for those on zero hour contracts to better tackle the assault on living standards.
- b) Cabinet to ensure the City Council social inclusion agenda continues to respond most effectively to rising living costs, the corporate plan helps to deliver an inclusive economy to better protect Norwich's health and well-being, while making the strongest case for government to provide the additional resource so urgently required.