

Motion to: Council

21 June 2022

Subject: The cost-of-living crisis in Norwich

Proposer: Councillor Huntley

Seconded: Councillor Waters

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 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, 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. 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.

Motion to: Council

21 June 2022

Subject: Private Renters Deserve the Right to a Secure, Decent and Affordable Home

Proposer: Councillor Jones

Seconded: Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister

Over 22% of Norwich people live in the private rented sector and this is increasing due to the unaffordability of homeownership and inaccessibility and lack of affordable social housing. There is little incentive for high housing standards due to the significant imbalance between high demand from potential tenants and low property availability.

Private renters face high rents, poor quality housing and insecurity, as well as the threat of eviction hanging over their heads. Action by government is vital to address this chronic emergency facing so many citizens in our city.

This council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) Note that many households in our city are facing the stark choices of food, heat, or rent as the Conservative government has increased taxes, and wages have failed to keep up with the rapid price rises. Rents in Britain are rising at their fastest rate on record and often far exceeds the local housing allowance. Private landlords can evict private tenants without giving them a reason by simply issuing a two-month notice after their fixed term tenancy ends under Section 21 no-fault evictions, with renters powerless to fight against this.
- 2) Call on government to:
 - a) Finally introduce the renters' reforms they promised and end Section 21 no-fault evictions, protecting tenants from unfair and unnecessary evictions
 - b) Introduce new legislation to create secure, permanent tenancies in line with Scotland
 - c) Provide local councils the power to introduce rent controls to protect private tenants from unpredictable and extortionate rent increases
 - d) Give councils the powers to introduce district wide licensing schemes setting out minimum standards of landlord accreditation to deter rogue landlords and drive-up standards in private renting without need for approval by the Secretary of State; and

- e) Provide adequate funding for local authorities to increase staffing levels in environmental health, trading standards, tenancy relations and other roles, which are needed to provide effective regulation and enforcement in the private rented sector.

Motion to: Council

21 June 2022

Subject: Fairer representation

Proposer: Councillor Osborn

Seconded: Councillor Bogelein

Government proposals to make voter photo ID mandatory could prevent 2.1 million people from voting despite voter fraud being negligible. This would disproportionately disenfranchise people from minority ethnic backgrounds: (e.g.: 47% of Black people in England don't have a driving licence, compared to 24% of white people) and social-renters. Requirements for voters to have photographic identification could come into effect as soon as 2023, leaving people in Norwich disenfranchised.

People in Norwich are already denied fair representation through the First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system. The all-out elections in 2019 demonstrated that Norwich is the third most unrepresentative council in England, as Greens needed more than twice the number of votes than Labour councillors to win a seat and Liberal Democrats needed even more.

Norwich South's Labour MP Clive Lewis recently spoke at the launch event of the campaign group Councils for PR, urging all councils to back the campaign.

Council **RESOLVES** to:

- 1) ask group leaders to write to the Minister of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ask for the government not to bring into effect the requirement for Voter ID in the Elections Act, noting the disproportionate impact it is likely to have on people with protected characteristics.
- 2) ask cabinet to work with the Electoral Registration Officer to establish a plan of public engagement to ensure that electors are not excluded from voting due to lack of voter ID, including by considering how existing points of contact with residents such as housing officers can be effectively used.
- 3) ask cabinet to work with the Electoral Registration Officer to engage with partners to work towards ensuring that electors are not excluded from voting due to lack of voter ID.
- 4) ask cabinet to produce a report considering how the council could support organisations campaigning for a fairer voting system and greater representation in democracy, such as Make Votes Matter, Councils for PR, the Sortition Foundation and others.

- 5) officially register support for Councils for PR and send a representative to a Councils for PR campaign meeting.
- 6) ask group leaders to write to the Government, to the Leader of the Opposition, and Norwich's MPs stating that this council supports a system of Proportional Representation for local and national Government elections and to suggest Norwich as a possible pilot area for PR in local government.