

Council

Thursday 21 July 2022

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LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

COUNCIL MEETING

-

21 July 2022

QUESTION WITH NOTICE

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for the asking of written questions by Members of Council or a Member of the Executive or the Chair of any Committee.

Questioner: Councillor Shahania Choudhury

Asked of: Councillor Anjana Patel, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Community Safety

Question 1:

“Numerous residents and businesses have been in contact recently with Labour Councillors regarding the extensive anti-social behaviour taking place by the Clock Tower in Wealdstone High Street. This escalating evening behaviour in recent weeks of large groups of people consuming alcohol and noise on the street is leaving residents, business owners and their customers intimidated. This issue was also raised by a resident during a deputation to TARSAP on Tuesday 12 July. What will you do to immediately intervene to alleviate this community safety problem?”

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Cost of Living Emergency in Harrow

This Council notes that:

Harrow and its residents are suffering due to a [Global](#) cost of living crisis:

- [Cost of oil and gas has spiked due to Putin's horrific and illegal war in the Ukraine, which has restricted supplies. The impact of this war, in addition to economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, has led to the price rises and inflation which has created this cost of living crisis.](#)
- On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54 per cent and this is almost certainly going to increase in October.
- In light of the increased energy price cap, the average standard tariff energy bill will increase by £600+ per year and the average pre-pay meter energy bills increasing by £700+ per year (*Ofgem, 2022*).
- On 6 April 2022, the Government increased National Insurance by 1.25% [to provide money for the NHS and social care](#), which is projected to cost the average Harrow family an additional £108 per year.
- [Harrow Council, under Labour, increased the Council Tax burden on Harrow residents by a staggering amount, which has only worsened the cost of living for local people. The previous Labour administration:](#)
 - [Increased Council Tax by the maximum every year.](#)
 - [Increased Council Tax by over 31% since 2011, the largest increase of any London Council.](#)
 - [Increased Council Tax by £79.72 in their February 2022 budget, the largest cash increase of any London Council this year.](#)
 - [After being in control of the Council for most of the last 12 years, Labour left Harrow with the second highest Council Tax rate of any London Council.](#)
- [Labour Mayor Khan has increased the GLA precept by 8.8% in April, adding £31.93 to Band D bills. The previous Conservative Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, froze the precept for his first term and cut it throughout his second term.](#)
- [The Labour Mayor of London is also planning to expand the ULEZ \(Ultra Low Emission Zone\) to include Harrow. This would mean Harrow's poorest residents, who can't afford to replace their cars, would be forced to pay £12.50 per day to drive their vehicles.](#)
- On 18 May 2022, inflation was confirmed at 9% [in the UK. Inflation is currently 9.1% in the USA and 8.6% in the Eurozone.](#)
- The escalating cost of fuel is putting huge strain on local people simply trying to go about their everyday lives. As of 12 July, petrol is at an average of 190.65p per litre, while diesel is 198.42p per litre. It is expected they will be more than £2 per litre by the end of the summer and already are in some petrol stations. Filling up a typical family car's 55-litre fuel tank with petrol now costs £104.86 on average, while it costs £109.13 to do so with diesel.
- The Government has suspended the pensions 'triple lock' for 2022/3, meaning that Harrow's pensioners will see a rise of 3.1 per cent this year (*instead of 8.3 per cent under the triple lock formula*). [This year, this will cost a Harrow pensioner on the full new state pension an average of £487, and on the full basic state pension an average of £373 \(TUC, 2022\)](#)

- In 2021/22 Harrow foodbanks have handed out food parcels to thousands of residents on a weekly basis, many of whom are families with children. This continues to get worse.
- ~~The recent 'Covid Additional Relief Fund' (CARF) and 'Household Support Fund' (HSF) has helped Harrow residents by providing much need financial relief. is just not adequate enough for the needs of Harrow families and businesses. Many will not even qualify for the schemes.~~
- The Conservative government has implemented a number of measures to ease the cost of living, including:
 - A £6 billion tax cut for 30 million working people across the UK, worth over £330 a year, by raising the National Insurance personal threshold from £9,500 to £12,570. Around 70 per cent of all workers will have their taxes cut by more than what they will pay through the levy to sustainably fund the NHS and social care.
 - A £150 Council Tax rebate and a £400 discount to energy bills in the autumn.
 - £326, the first of two cost of living payments, will automatically be paid into 7 million bank accounts between 14 July and 31 July 2022 as part of the government's £37 billion support package. The second instalment of £324 will follow from the autumn, with separate payments for pensioners and disabled people also coming later this year.
- Harrow Council's new Conservative administration are introducing policies which will save residents money:
 - 1 Hour of Free on Street Parking will commence in August.
 - Before the end of the year, the Council will introduce a free bulky waste collection service.
 - Extend Free School Meals during school holidays to include May Half Term and the 6-week summer holiday.

Council believes:

- Under the current government, Due to a Global pandemic and the war in the Ukraine people around the world are seeing tax hikes, energy bills soaring and fuel and food prices rising drastically.
- The Government over this period has taken unprecedented measures to support Harrow residents.
- The Government should continue its strong and proud record of supporting Harrow's residents and should see what further measures can be introduced.

Council resolves to:

- ~~To d~~Declare a "Cost of Living Emergency".
- Work with local MPs and neighbouring Councils to lobby the Secretary of State responsible for local government and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that Harrow residents get the support that they need at this difficult time.
- ~~Council instructs the Interim Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and three local Harrow MPs (Gareth Thomas, Bob Blackman and David Simmonds) to collaboratively write to the relevant Secretaries of State to express concerns over the points raised above along with seeking a meeting to discuss local circumstances and argue;~~
 - ~~Against the changes to the 'Pension' Triple Lock,~~
 - ~~Consider a regular Windfall Tax on energy giants supporting residents with ongoing energy bills should the Cost-of-Living Crisis deepen in future years.~~
 - ~~Further duty reductions on fuel at the pumps~~

- Endorse the setting up of a local 'Cost of Living Emergency Summit' to be led by the Leader of the Council ~~and Leader of the Opposition~~, with other stakeholders ~~including Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trades Unions, Chambers of Commerce and invite local MPs to attend~~ to discuss how the Council could further support residents in the future, work collaboratively, offer further support and use its influence to create positive change.
- Immediately work with all relevant stakeholders in Harrow to seek an increase in both CARF and HSF funding.

Amendment

Proposer: Cllr. Paul Osborn

Secunder: Cllr. Marilyn Ashton

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