

Proper funding for public services Motion

Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Paul Osborn and Seconded by Cllr. Richard Almond

Austerity has ~~caused huge damage~~ had an effect on ~~to~~ communities up and down the UK, ~~with devastating effects on key public services that protect the most defenceless in society— children at risk, disabled adults and vulnerable older people—and the services we all rely on, like clean streets, libraries, and community centres.~~

~~The idea that a~~ Austerity was a necessary choice. ~~After the Labour Government of Gordon Brown had created an unsustainable Public Sector deficit, the Coalition Government took steps to put the public finances back on a secure footing. As a result of this choice, the Leadership candidates seeking to succeed Theresa May have been able to make spending commitments that will improve public services. has been disproved and its architects discredited, not least due to the soaring inequality and divisions they have let fester in the last decade. David Cameron said “we’re all in this together” but spent his time in office forcing cuts on the many while giving handouts to the privileged few. His predecessor Theresa May had to declare that “austerity is over”, despite planning a further £1.3bn of cuts to council budgets over the following year. Chancellor Philip Hammond’s callous remarks: “I reject that there are vast numbers of people facing dire poverty in this country,” show just how blind the Conservatives are to the havoc they have wreaked upon the country. The race to succeed Theresa May has shown just what a con austerity was, with candidates making fast and loose promises of tax breaks for the richest members of our society, while saying nothing about the impact of cuts to the welfare state and education.~~

In Harrow, ~~the impact of austerity has been shocking.~~ ~~a~~ Already one of the lowest funded councils in London, ~~this government’s reckless policies~~ we continue to ~~have put an unacceptable~~ strain on our finances, ~~and cause damage to our residents.~~

This council notes:

- Over 30% of children in Harrow live in poverty and the inequalities within the borough are staggering, with child poverty rising to 40% in some wards.
- Last year, the Harrow food bank fed over 2617 people, including over 1041 children. Additionally, we have witnessed an increasing number of charities and voluntary groups and places of worship are providing free meals on a more regular basis.
- Since Labour took control of Harrow Council in 2010, inequalities in life expectancy have increased in Harrow – men now live seven years longer and women five years longer in the richest parts of the borough compared to the poorest.
- The ~~government~~ Labour Mayor of London has cut the budget of the Metropolitan police drastically, forcing a reduction in officer numbers with fewer 3,000 police officers and 3,000 fewer community support officers now operating in the capital compared to 2010.

- This has led to an explosion in violent crime – last year there were 135 violent murders in the capital, the highest number for 10 years.
- Harrow has also seen an increase in violent crime with knife crime becoming a more frequent occurrence.
- ~~In order to put 1,000 officers back on the streets, the Mayor of London has increased council tax—shifting the burden for policing the capital away from general taxation and onto hard-pressed Londoners.~~

- The Mayor could fund 1,378 additional police officers, with £83m of savings to the GLA budget identified in a budget amendment this year, but has refused to do so.
- The Mayor delayed recruitment of new police officers last year by six months, despite being given the money to do so.
- Rather than fund new police officers, the Mayor has chosen, for example, to spend £19m on new staff at City Hall, £13m on his PR company, and over £400,000 on a beach party.

- The Young Harrow Foundation’s Needs Analysis found that 20% of Harrow’s young people need mental health support while 17% need help with suicidal thoughts or know someone who needs this help.
- Funding for youth services has been cut by a national average of 34% between 2010/11 – 2017/18, with London suffering the worst cuts in the country.
- This year, a report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime has found a link between these cuts and the rise in youth violence which we have also witnessed in Harrow.
- The NHS continues to struggle under the financial pressures – in January 2017 the Red Cross warned of a ‘humanitarian crisis’ in the health service and currently patients are experiencing record waiting times for non-urgent care.

- School funding has fallen by 6.5% per pupil to the year 2019-20.

- The UK unemployment rate was 3.8% in March-May 2019, the joint lowest rate since 1975. The ILO measure of unemployment was 1.29 million people, 51,000 fewer than the previous quarter and 116,000 fewer than the year before.
- The number of people in employment was 32.75 million, 28,000 more than the previous quarter and 354,000 more than the year before. The employment rate was 76.0%, up from 75.6% from the year before.
- 8.62 million people aged 16-64 were economically inactive, 83,000 more than the previous quarter but 43,000 fewer than the year before. The inactivity rate was 20.9%.

- Average weekly pay for employees in Great Britain increased by 3.4% including bonuses in the three months to May 2019 compared with the previous year. The increase was 3.6% excluding bonuses, the highest growth rate since 2008.
- CPI inflation averaged 2.0% over this period, meaning that average earnings both including and excluding bonuses grew faster than prices.

- Harrow council's revenue support government grant has been cut by 97% (£50 million) over the last six years.
- The council says it is facing further funding gap of £26 million in the next two years.
- ~~On top of these cuts, t~~The council has increased its adult social care spend by 55%, leaving less and less money available for other vital services that our residents rely on.
- ~~Inevitably, i~~it is our residents who suffer ~~these strains, whether it be through reduced services or~~ increased council tax.

This council resolves:

- To call on the incoming leader of the Conservative Party and de facto new prime minister to ~~take responsibility for the terrible human cost of their party's austerity programme and~~ make the necessary investment to properly fund public services.”