



## Full Council – 20 September 2021

### Motion for Non Cabinet Member debate

#### Cuts to Universal Credit

This council understands how hard this borough has been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the tragedy that is the loss of more than 720 lives, the uncertainty of a local economy put on hold, and the hardship of tens of thousands of Brent's residents either furloughed or out of work and reliant on an inadequate Universal Credit.

Therefore, the announcement of this government plans to cut Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit later this year comes with serious implications, especially in light of the furlough scheme coming to an end in September.

This council is concerned at the soaring figures of food bank usage in the borough coupled with the increase in gas prices as we wind down into the colder months forming a perfect storm. One which emerging research has shown will force thousands of families into severe poverty.

This council notes its efforts to shield its residents from the full impact of the economic downturn in recent years, particularly in anticipation of the furlough scheme ending. Thus far this council has:

- Set up significant monetary support through the Brent Resident Support Fund which has been access by thousands of residents.
- Contributed a further £500k to Brent works to extend this scheme as furlough ends.
- Organised two Job Fairs to help connect residents with potential employers.
- Worked with businesses to place young people into 'kick start', a new youth work placement scheme, helping to provide a much needed boost to youth employment in the borough.
- Employed an ethical approach to financial inclusion which is reflected in Brent's Ethical Debt and Debt Write Off policy.
- Supported private renters to sustain tenancies and avoid eviction.

However this council recognises the limits of its abilities to mitigate the economic downturn for its most vulnerable residents and calls upon the government to step up to its duty to protect those most at risk.

This council points out, that families most at risk of deepening poverty will not benefit from the increases because they are subject to the benefits cap. Migrants without recourse to public funds, many of whom work in industries hardest hit by the lockdown, have also been left out in the cold and millions of families reliant on the legacy benefit system did not receive the uplift channelled through Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit.

This council therefore calls upon the Government to:

- Continue the £20-a-week increase to Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit early contributions which was brought in to help households deal with the impact of COVID-19.
- Extend this to other benefit schemes to help residents who are most in financial need and have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.
- Support Councils through better funding to help them up skill and retrain residents at risk of unemployment as furlough ends.

Councillor Elliot Chappell  
Willesden Green Ward