

Birmingham City Council

City Council

7 December 2021



Subject: Motions for Debate from Individual Members

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:

To consider the following Motions of which notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rules (section B4 G of the Constitution).

A. Councillors John Cotton and Katherine Iroh have given notice of the following Notice of Motion:-

“This Council notes that the current national Government is presiding over a low growth, high tax and high price economy.

For many people across Birmingham it is going to be a tough winter, with rising costs, rising taxes and Universal Credit cuts.

- Gas bills are up
- Petrol costs are up
- Food costs are up.

The Government has handed tax cuts to big companies like Amazon, while putting taxes up for working families with a record increase in National Insurance.

The Government has also brought in a tax which will impact more than 12% of self-employed people, which will see 6,974 self-employed workers in Birmingham hit with a £3,000 tax hike.

There are 136,082 households in Birmingham in receipt of Universal Credit (as of House of Commons Library figures from August 2021). Each household will have been impacted by the £20 per week cut to Universal Credit, further exacerbating the impact of rising prices.

This Council further notes that it has received recognition for its work with employers to tackle the scandal of poverty pay and make Birmingham a Living Wage City. This

builds upon the Council's own position as a Real Living Wage employer, by setting out a plan to ensure that more employees, across all sectors of the city economy, are also paid the Real Living Wage.

The Real Living Wage is the only wage rate that is independently calculated upon the basis of the real cost of living and which applies to all workers aged over 18. The increase to the Real Living Wage rate means that it is now £9.90 per hour for all workers aged 18 and over.

The Government's National Living Wage, which is not calculated on this independent basis and discriminates against younger workers, is just £8.91 per hour for those aged 23 and older, is £8.36 per hour for those aged 21 and 22, £6.56 per hour for those aged 18 to 20 and £4.62 per hour for under 18s.

The Council is attracting record levels of investment into the city, with jobs being created in construction, finance, media and the arts, leisure, retail and many more sectors.

Therefore, the Council resolves to call upon the Government to:

Abolish VAT on domestic energy bills for the next six months to help hardworking families to get through the winter months.

The abolition of VAT on domestic energy bills can be paid for through higher-than-expected VAT receipts from the first half of the year, and a temporary increase in taxes on digital services firms like Google and Facebook who have done so well out of the pandemic.

Reverse the stealth tax on self-employed people which will save 6,974 people in Birmingham from a £3,000 tax rise.

Reverse the cut to Universal Credit. Working people have taken another hit through the cuts to Universal Credit, and with inflation rising this is going to start to bite.

This Council also:

Restates its commitment to the Real Living Wage and endorses the work of the Making Birmingham a Living Wage City Group as a welcome step towards tackling the injustices of poverty pay and in-work poverty.

Taken together, these measures would help to alleviate the pressures on working families in Birmingham and across the country."

B. Councillors Simon Morrall and Darius Sandhu have given notice of the following Notice of Motion:-

"This Council believes that there should be no limit to how far hard work and talent can take you and that for Birmingham to unleash its potential, every individual within it needs to be given the opportunity to unleash theirs.

This Council therefore notes:

- Its concern that the skills gap within Birmingham remains a barrier to opportunity with higher than average unemployment and lower than average pay.
- 53% businesses report difficulties in filling vacancies with a third of businesses struggling to hire candidates with the right technical background.
- 9.5% of the working age population have no qualifications, well above the national average of 6.3%.
- If you live in Birmingham, you are twice as likely to be unemployed but if you are in work you can expect to earn £40 a week less than the national average.
- The disparity across different communities in the city, for example if you live in Frankley Great Park you are less than half as likely to pass English and Maths GCSE than if you live in Moseley.
- Notes the council has sent back £5 million in Apprenticeship Levy funds to HM Treasury, since 2017, instead of investing it into Birmingham City Council staff.

We therefore call up on Executive to:

- Create a cross party taskforce to investigate ways to close the skills gap in Birmingham and drive down unemployment.
- Work at a greater level with current key industries and the businesses within them, such as the automotive industry and JLR, to encourage them to expand their operations, skill and reskill local people and grow their local workforce.
- Write a strategy to ensure Birmingham becomes the Green Manufacturing hub of the United Kingdom and adopts a position in which any opportunity for investment is applied for.
- Review the spending of the Apprenticeship Levy to ensure as many Council Staff are upskilled via apprentice training to be able to deliver a higher quality service to Birmingham Residents. We also ask the Council to commit to continuing to gifting 25% of the Levy to small and medium sized businesses who can benefit from the money.”