

7 – Administration Motion for Debate - The Government Have Failed our Children and Young People

Amendment proposer: Cllr Peter Golds

Amendment seconder: Cllr Andrew Wood

Insertions underlined, deletions struck through

This Council notes:

1. That the FOI response FOI: 22996542 Financial support to LBTH during Covid stated that Tower Hamlets Council had received “£62.6m in grants for Council expenditure and reduced income”
2. That the Health and Wellbeing Board was told on the 17th November 2020 that the Council had been informed on the 11th June about an additional £3.2 million grant of money for Local Authority Test and Trace Service Support Grant.
3. That there are reports of an additional £1.203 million in government grants to support children, families and our most vulnerable residents over the winter, as yet unconfirmed.
4. That in the Cabinet meeting on the 28th October we were informed that in the P5 budget monitor that:
 - a. £30.6 million would be received from government in 2019/20 & 2020/21 for COVID relief, this was verbally amended to add an additional £14 millions of extra money recently received for a total of £44.6 million.
 - b. That the total forecast impact of COVID on the Council finances were £35.9 million for 2020/21.
5. That these numbers are very different to those detailed in the Councils 5th August press release titled “Council pleads with government to honour its Covid-19 funding promise” which said then that the total cost of COVID was £60 million and that only £30 million had been committed from government.
6. The uncertainty and confusion that these different numbers have caused which make it impossible to understand the true impact of COVID on this year’s budget.

1. The Government’s exams fiasco which saw a large number of teacher predictions for A-levels and GCSE exam results – particularly in more deprived areas – downgraded by an algorithm until the Government performed a U-turn and permitted teacher assessed grades to be used;
2. The exams fiasco caused a huge amount of unnecessary uncertainty and upset for many young people across the country, as well as jeopardising their futures;
3. The Government’s failure to continue its Free School Meals (FSM) programme throughout the October half-term holiday, despite the pandemic and the jobs crisis causing hardship for many families who were already struggling;
4. That charities, individuals, community groups and local authorities – including Tower Hamlets – had to fill the gap left by the Government’s failure to continue FSM over the holiday;
5. ~~That children and young people have suffered more than most throughout the austerity programme introduced by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in 2010, through the rise in child poverty, cuts to youth services, cuts to school funding, failure to properly fund special needs education, cuts to council budgets, welfare reforms, the coalition’s decision to treble tuition fees despite the Lib Dem promise to abolish them, and more;~~

6. That welfare reforms, including the Universal Credit rollout, the 5-week wait, the benefit cap, the two-child limit and the Government's plans to scrap the Universal Credit uplift meaning families will lose over £1,000, have all had a significant impact on children and young people;
7. The Government's failures on Covid-19 testing have left pupils out of school when they do not have symptoms but cannot access a test, worsening the attainment gap;
8. That the Department for Education informed some schools last month that the number of laptops they were promised had been cut by 80% after changes to the allocation process;
9. That the Government has failed to prepare and respond to the challenge of the Covid-19 situation in universities;
10. The Government's threat to remove free travel for under 18s as part of a TfL deal, which was rejected by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan;
11. Tower Hamlets Council funds a wide range of tackling poverty measures, including providing a Council Tax Reduction Scheme with council tax reductions of up to and including 100% depending on circumstances (meaning the most disadvantaged don't have to pay a single penny of council tax), of which nearly 32,000 households in the borough receive some level of council tax discount. The council also funds holiday hunger programmes and provides universal FSM to all primary school pupils, going significantly beyond the Government-funded FSM programme which only funds FSM for some children;
12. That our Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council.

This Council believes:

1. That until we fully understand what money has been received from government in COVID support and the forecast costs of COVID for 202/21 we are not in a position to understand whether or not the government has met its commitments.
2. That there may be excess COVID funds available this year to supplement government programmes for example by buying extra laptops.

1. That since 2010, austerity has significantly affected our children and young people, with child poverty on the increase;
2. That the Government's approach to supporting people during the pandemic—leaving families to sink or swim—is having a devastating impact;
3. The Government has failed our children and young people.

This Council resolves:

1. To condemn the Government for its failure to tackle child poverty;
2. To ask the Mayor and Cabinet Member to write to every member of the council, setting out how Tower Hamlets Council is tackling poverty in the borough, supporting families, and how the council is working to seize every chance for every child or young person to be healthy, safe and successful;
3. To demand that the Department for Education responds to the points raised in this motion, and to warn that Tower Hamlets Council's Tackling Poverty work and other support schemes are under increasing threat unless the Government adequately funds the council;
4. To continue to lobby the Government for proper funding for our schools, councils and youth services, and to continue to lobby against detrimental changes to the welfare safety net.

5. Not to lobby or to write to the department for extra money and support until it fully understands its own financial situation as regards the direct impact of COVID in 2020/21. That if there is then a gap in financial support to lobby the government to fill that gap.
6. To update its press releases with the latest financial news, updating the 5th August news release with the latest financial information on COVID.