

Amendment Received for Council – 12 October 2022

Item 8 (b) LIBERAL DEMOCRATS GROUP AMENDMENT of the Motion Submitted by the Labour Group

The Energy and Cost of Living Crises

We have an energy crisis of huge magnitude hanging over our heads and the assistance offered by the government so far is of little help to those already in fuel poverty. The help is not targeted at those who most need it. Businesses and public sector organisations also continue to face uncertainty.

Meantime, energy providers such as BP and Shell continue to make massive profits, and the government is launching a new oil and gas licensing round and lifting the moratorium on UK shale gas production, when there is clear scientific evidence that we must keep fossil fuels in the ground to avert climate breakdown.

Our energy security has been under threat for some time, and not only because of the importance of supporting Ukraine. Climate change, extreme weather conditions and a lack of investment in infrastructure are also impacting this.

It does not need to be like this. Instead of a piece meal approach, a long-term energy plan should have been started years ago.

The government could have reduced our dependency on fossil fuels and the vagaries of the energy market by investing in renewables and green technology, so honouring its commitment to reducing carbon emissions and addressing the climate emergency.

The government could have increased its long duration energy storage capabilities (LDES), thus obviating the wastage of energy from renewables, and could have decided not to close gas storage facilities.

The government could have initiated an immediate accessible insulation programme to ensure that everyone is warm and to reduce energy consumption.

This energy crisis has been one of the main drivers behind our cost of living crisis, a crisis exacerbated in recent weeks by the reckless behaviour demonstrated by the Government in the form of its 'mini-budget', with the threat of further cuts to services. Whilst the richest 5% would have benefited from unfunded tax cuts, many more households face higher mortgage rates and seeing their pensions put at risk as the markets act with alarm in response to the government's irresponsible fiscal policy. A combination of the energy crisis and recent fiscal measures have put many households across Trafford in a precarious position.

Trafford Council has a track record of offering meaningful winter support to vulnerable residents. Last year's winter care package programme, which grant funding allowed the Council to deliver across Borough, made a positive difference to so many of our most vulnerable residents.

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Whilst competition for these type of programmes is fierce, this Council believes that a similar scheme is needed again this winter as even more people are being pushed into Fuel Poverty by the Conservatives' Cost of Living crisis.

The Council - while recognising that these are not measures one of the richest countries in the world should have to consider - resolves to:

- Continue to find ways to support our residents and local businesses in accessing the welfare benefits, grants and payments due to them.
- Provide free accessible friendly Warm Hubs where our residents can stay as long as they like and have access to hot drinks.
- Provide information for residents and local businesses on creative ways to save energy.
- Support local community and co-operative initiatives to deliver investment in renewables, such as the Trafford for Solar Community Benefit Society solar offer.
- **Develop a Winter Care Package programme for vulnerable residents across Trafford – exploring every possible avenue for funding.**

The Council resolves to write to the Government to demand:

- An urgent targeted increased assistance package for those on prepayment meters, low incomes, disabilities.
- The reintroduction of the £20 a week uplift in Universal Credit, extended to all welfare benefits.
- Targeted assistance for small businesses.
- Targeted assistance for schools, hospitals and other public buildings.
- A rapid increased investment in renewables and energy storage (LDES).
- The introduction of an accessible, urgent insulation programme.