



**Council – 24 January 2019**

**Notice of Motion from Councillors M Sherwood, J E Burtonshaw, R C Stewart, C E Lloyd, M C Child, W Evans, R Francis-Davies, D H Hopkins, E J King, A S Lewis, J A Raynor & M Thomas**

## **Notice of Motion on Addressing Extreme Poverty in the UK**

Following Professor Alston's recent visit to the United Kingdom, this council notes with alarm the shocking report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and human rights.

We echo Professor Alston's observation that despite being the world's fifth largest economy, it seems patently unjust that 14 million people, a fifth of the population, live in poverty, while 1.5 million are destitute and unable to afford basic essentials. We agree that, "For almost one in every two children to be poor in twenty-first century Britain is not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one".

We welcome the report's focus on the social security system, and the cruel impacts of welfare reform in explaining how this dramatic decline has come about. Simply, benefit changes have forced people into crisis, while the decimation of council and third sector support services have left them having to turn to more costly services.

We concur with the report's many observations about this UK government's failures in the name of austerity and their blatant "state of denial" of the dramatic decline in the fortunes of the least well off in this country. Therefore, we call for the Prime Minister to respond to the report by urgently implementing its recommendations:

1. Reverse the benefit freeze, the two-child limit, the benefit cap, and the bedroom tax.
2. Ensure local governments have the funds needed to tackle poverty at the community level, and take varying needs and tax bases into account in the ongoing Fair Funding Review.
3. Conduct an independent review of the effectiveness of sanctions and immediately instruct DWP staff to explore more constructive and less punitive approaches to encouraging compliance.
4. Eliminate the five week delay in receiving benefits under Universal Credit, allow separate payments to different household members, and facilitate weekly or fortnightly payments.

and, from our local experience of Universal Credit, we add:

5. Make the DWP behave like a responsible lender and conduct affordability assessments on UC claimants before issuing advances which often push people into unmanageable debt.
6. Re-instate the work allowances originally designed into UC.
7. Facilitate payments direct to landlords to reduce rent arrears.

We resolve that the Council Leader will write to the Prime Minister setting out the contents of this motion.