



Council

Monday 18 July 2022

Agenda Item 11, Motions

Motion Proposer: Councillor Perran Moon

Motion Seconder: Councillor Rebecca Biegel

Topic: Motion to declare a Food Poverty Emergency

Motion

“The long-term effects of the COVID pandemic, spiralling inflation and stagnant wages are leaving many adults and children across our communities hungry. Over 2m people in the UK are now reliant on food banks.

Many residents throughout Cherwell are facing the terrible choice of heating or eating. The situation this coming winter is set to get worse. Fuel bills and the cost of food are both likely to increase again in the autumn. The knock-on effects on declining mental health will increase the burden on the NHS.

This Council acknowledges the suffering of residents struggling to feed themselves and their families and declares a Food Poverty Emergency.

We commit to:

- Designating a Food Champion: a lead member for food poverty at Cherwell District Council
- Establishing and reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the scale of the food poverty crisis in Cherwell
- Drawing up a Cherwell Food Action Plan that supports local communities in helping to relieve the food poverty emergency, in line with the new countywide food strategy
- Developing a promotional campaign that raises awareness of underclaimed Healthy Start food vouchers
- Supporting local communities to reduce food waste and improve the food choices of residents and continuing to be an active member of the Cherwell Community Food Network."

Motion Proposer: Councillor David Hingley

Motion Seconder: Councillor Ian Middleton

Topic: Cost of Living Crisis

Motion

“There is a pressing need to address the cost-of-living crisis.

Inflation is squeezing already stretched household budgets – propelled largely by energy price increases. On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the household energy price cap by 54 per cent - this excludes homes using solid fuel oil or bottled gas. However, the cap does not protect businesses. Energy cost rises affect all aspects of life: from logistics and food production to home heating and cooking. Many Cherwell families face the hard choice between heating and eating.

This crisis demonstrates the need to change our energy supply, not only to prevent a climate catastrophe, but also to maintain a functioning economy for all. The UK Government has announced tax reliefs for companies investing in "UK extraction". This move is encouraging more investment in North Sea oil and gas extraction, whilst hampering energy decarbonisation plans.

This Council therefore declares a ‘Cost of Living Crisis’ and calls on the Leader to write to the Government to:

1. Put in place schemes for subsidising bus and train travel, to ensure people can travel affordably and sustainably
2. Urgently review the energy cap to cover all types of domestic fuels and provide protection to SMEs.
3. Expand the coverage of the Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief.
4. Provide immediate financial support for councils to aid the most vulnerable.
5. Demonstrate a real and immediate increase of investment in UK renewables to decarbonise the energy sector and prevent a future energy fuelled cost of living crisis.”

Motion Proposer: Councillor Ian Middleton

Motion Seconder: Councillor Gemma Coton

Topic: Campsfield House, Kidlington, Motion

Motion

“The Home Office intends to reopen Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre in Kidlington, as part of the newly signed migrant deportation agreement signed with the Rwandan Government.

Before its closure in 2018, Campsfield detained hundreds of migrants - some for years. There were weekly demonstrations, prison protests, hunger strikes, two suicides, escapes and scores of legal challenges. Management switched between three of the UK’s main private prison providers before the closure, following a damning enquiry into conditions.

The UK’s ‘Economic and Development Partnership’ with Rwanda has been condemned as inhumane and illegal by international bodies, the UNHCR, politicians from all parties, legal experts and a large part of the British population. Not one migrant has yet been deported, due to legal challenges.

Reopening Campsfield is cruel, ineffective, and costly. Instead of criminalising and deporting migrants out of Cherwell, the government should re-invest in many of the aid projects working to mitigate the key drivers of migration. If the government does reopen Campsfield House, then this council should commit to ensuring that Cherwell District provides no direct support for it.

This Council therefore condemns the re-opening of Campsfield House and calls on the leader to write to the Government to:

1. Cancel the Campsfield House reopening as a detention centre.
2. Create safe havens and legal routes to apply for asylum in the United Kingdom.
3. Restore the UK’s commitment to spend 0.7% of its Gross National Income on overseas aid to support countries to tackle the key drivers of migration.”

Motion Proposer: Councillor Ian Middleton

Motion Seconder: Councillor Angus Patrick

Topic: Refugee Crisis Motion

Motion

“The UK government response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been criticised for its slow start and unnecessary bureaucracy at a time of extreme stress for people fleeing a war zone.

Many of the problems associated with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme have been piled on to local authorities already dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis.

Nevertheless, the generosity of our residents and the dedication and hard work of our housing team has ensured that hundreds of guests have been placed with hosts in Cherwell. But there is now some uncertainty about the longer-term prospects for these people as the conflict in their home country continues.

Ukrainian support groups such as the Opora network have reported that finding longer term accommodation may be hampered by requirements from landlords and lettings agencies for extensive reference checks, including proof of earnings in the UK going back some years along with other documentation. According to reports, many refugees have been told point blank that they have no chance of renting in the UK. This is a problem that may impact all refugees.

This Council therefore re-affirms its commitment to providing as much support as we are able to all refugees in Cherwell and calls on the leader to write urgently to the Home Secretary seeking reassurances on long-term support packages, including national agreements with landlords and lettings organisations to prevent another major crisis that our housing and homeless agencies will have to deal with.”