

EX86. Motions referred to the Executive under Standing Order 31

(a) Falkirk Families Face Financial Crisis

On 10 November 2021, and in accordance with Standing Order 31.1, Council referred the following motion, proposed by Councillor Collie, to the Executive:-

Council acknowledges that many Falkirk residents are facing a cost-of-living crisis, with increasing financial pressures, due to cuts to in-work benefits, tax hikes and the long-term damage of Brexit hammering low and middle-income families.

Much of this has been as a direct result of the impact of the Conservative UK Government's progression of a cut of £1,000 in Universal Credit for around 13,000 Falkirk families in the face of widespread opposition - including charities working with people in poverty and all parties voting to condemn this plan in the Scottish Parliament on September 28th 2021 - with only the Conservatives supporting their colleagues' attack on the poorest in our society.

Based on August 2021 figures, as a result 12,763 Households in Falkirk who claim Universal Credit and around 4683 of our most vulnerable households on Universal Credit will be subject to the removal of the £20 a week lifeline.

This will reduce household incomes by £4,870,320 per year to the hard-pressed residents in Falkirk who need it most, pushing thousands more families into poverty, including 2,725 households with someone who has a disability and an estimated 6,980 children in Falkirk.

Also, the compound impact of this cut on existing policies such as the family cap with its abhorrent rape clause with other factors such as energy and food price rises which will push the impact on a single working parent of 2 children to £1,750 a year according to analysis by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Council also notes warnings that energy bills are expected to rise, alongside National Insurance payments as well as an increase in inflation. This perfect storm will create further pressures to families, and potentially impact on Falkirk Councils medium term financial strategy.

The Leader of the Council is therefore instructed to write to the Prime Minister and outline the urgent need to boost household incomes.

For example, the recent increase in the national minimum wage would take up to 10 years to reach a level that would provide a sustainable income for families, there is therefore an urgent need for the minimum wage be increased to a realistic level that will enable household incomes to be sustainable and reverse the rising levels of poverty in the UK. This includes ensuring that younger workers are equally protected from poverty, particularly those with children. The Council should make clear in its content

that it is essential that an emergency package of measures is introduced to boost incomes and reverse the damage caused by Tory policies.

Council asks that officers bring a report to the next council, Executive and Education, Children & Young People's Committees outlining the potential impacts to the council area including likely pressures on housing and homelessness, child poverty, in work poverty and other likely impacts.

Councillor Meiklejohn, seconded by Councillor Bouse, moved the terms of the motion.

Decision

The Executive agreed the motion.