

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

6th March 2019

Labour councillors call for emergency measures to ease the housing crisis

Bexley's Labour Group of councillors have tonight tabled a motion calling upon Bexley's Conservative councillors to use unspent monies provided by developers for social homes to be inserted into the council's budget to help ease the housing crisis.

The meeting to agree the council's annual budget heard that the cost of temporary accommodation has risen from £1,072,000 in 2014/15 to £7,507,000 in 2019/20 an increase of £6,435,000, or the equivalent of a 6.1% council tax increase with just under 1400 families and over 2000 children now living in temporary accommodation.

Despite this, during this period the Conservative council has allowed a number of schemes to be given planning permission with 0% affordable housing included in the scheme and have allowed £1.459 million of funds given to it by developers for new social homes to be unspent.

Labour's budget amendment also asked Conservative councillors to seek agreement from the Government to urgently recognise the financial crisis facing councils leaving them at Breaking Point, provide the funding needed to maintain essential services and ask the Prime Minister to publicly acknowledge that austerity is not over and the Secretary of State to reverse his policy that forces councils to increase council taxes by the maximum possible each year while cutting services.

Cllr Joe Ferreira, Shadow Cabinet Member for Growth said "Bexley's Tories have delivered a housing crisis through their approval of a number of large developments with no social homes. While the council is having to plough millions into temporary accommodation, it is a scandal that monies given to us to provide new homes have sat in the bank in some cases since 2016.

Cllr Daniel Francis, Leader of the Labour Group said "Despite the Prime Minister's claims, it is clear that austerity is far from over. In his role as Secretary of State for Local Government, the MP for Old Bexley and Sidcup is forcing councils to raise council tax while cutting services through the Government's funding settlement to local councils. Our amendment asked the council to stand up for Bexley residents rather than the Tory Government and we were disappointed to see Tory councillors refuse to fight for additional monies for services for our most vulnerable residents."

-ENDS-

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Labour's budget amendment tabled at the Full Council meeting on 6th March:

This Council notes that the Prime Minister has publicly stated that austerity is over, and the Secretary of State has indicated that this year's local government funding settlement is sufficient to allow councils to provide services to a standard that our residents expect and that our most vulnerable residents can rely on.

It also acknowledges that as a result to take action to provide social housing that Bexley's housing crisis has spiralled with the cost of temporary accommodation rising from £1,072,000 in 2014/15 to £7,507,000 in 2019/20 an increase of £6,435,000, the equivalent of a 6.1% council tax increase (based on the 2019/20 Council Tax Base).

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Recommend to the Cabinet that they seek agreement from the Government to urgently recognise the financial crisis facing councils in London which is leaving them at Breaking Point, and provide the funding needed to maintain the essential services our residents rely on.
- Ask the Prime Minister to publicly acknowledge that austerity is not over and the Secretary of State to reverse his policy that forces councils to increase council taxes by the maximum possible each year while cutting services.
- Take immediate action to help resolve the housing crisis by amending Recommendation 1 and therefore with effect Recommendation 5, to amend the Capital Programme by allocating £1,459,116 of currently unallocated Section 106 affordable housing contributions in order to increase the monies to be contributed to the provision of affordable housing in 2019/20 from £2,280,000 to £3,739,116.