

From: Debbie Abrahams <abrahamsd@parliament.uk>
Sent: 02 March 2021 17:00
To: Carolyn Wilkins <Carolyn.Wilkins@oldham.gov.uk>
Subject: Full Council Resolutions - December (Case Ref: DA39633)

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your letters of 8th February, received 15th February, detailing resolutions passed by Full Council at the meeting on 16th December.

With regard to the Fair Grade campaign on school exams, you will be aware that the Education Secretary announced on Wednesday 6th January that exams would be cancelled this year. In his statement to Parliament he said:

“Another area where we have learnt lessons is exams. Last year, all four nations of the United Kingdom found that their arrangements for awarding grades did not deliver what they needed, with the painful impact felt by students and their parents. Although exams are the fairest way we have of assessing what a student knows, the impact of the pandemic means that it is not possible to have these exams this year. I can confirm that GCSE, A-level and AS-level exams will not go ahead this summer.

“This year, we will put our trust in teachers rather than algorithms. My Department and Ofqual had already worked up a range of contingency options. While the details will need to be fine-tuned in consultation with Ofqual, the exam boards and teaching representative organisations, I can confirm now that I wish to use a form of teacher-assessed grades, with training and support provided to ensure that these are awarded fairly and consistently across the country.”

We believe that any replacement system must be fair and consider the huge amount of learning that has been lost by pupils – and the regional differences in disruption to schooling over the last year. We will be holding Ministers to account on this to ensure last summer’s exam fiasco is not repeated.

On the Spending Review and support for local government, you will be aware that at the outset of the pandemic, on 16 March, Robert Jenrick told over 300 council leaders that the Government stood ready to do whatever is necessary to support councils in their response to coronavirus. They have broken this promise leaving councils facing a funding gap this financial year estimated by the cross-party Local Government Association to be £2.6 billion.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic impact on council finances. According to the Local Government Association, “the latest figures from the COVID monitoring survey put the financial impact of COVID-19 on local authorities at an estimated £9.7 billion for 2020/21, with a further £2.8 billion of lost income from council tax and business rates.” This follows on the heels of a decade in which councils took the brunt of Government cuts. Councils in England have seen their core funding from central government reduce by £15 billion in the last decade.

In addition, hidden in the fine print of the Chancellor’s November Spending Review was an

assumption that councils would raise council tax by up to 5%. That council tax hike is central government passing the burden over to local councils, and ultimately to families across the country. £1.9 billion of the £2.2 billion forecast increase in spending power in 2020-21 is based on councils raising council tax by the maximum possible allowed without a referendum. I raised this with the Secretary of State in the Commons on 17th December – <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-12-17/debates/4E79132B-ED11-441E-85F5-616B46B665F4/ProvisionalLocalGovernmentFinanceSettlement#contribution-EE4BC9F7-1A1A-4220-BF3E-51BA71E65A28>

This year's funding settlement continues the Government's trend of making councils ever more reliant on council tax to fund services. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimate that council tax will account for 61% of overall core funding in 2021-22, compared to 49% in 2015-16 and closer to 40% back in 2009-10.

On key worker pay, I am concerned at the pay freeze for public sector and key workers. As you will be aware, over 1 million key workers face a real-terms pay cut next year. That includes 125,000 police officers, 500,000 teachers, 300,000 civil service staff and 125,000 armed forces personnel.

By failing to reaffirm the Government's manifesto commitment to ensure that teachers' starting salaries reach £30,000 by 2022, the Chancellor has made it clear that he has no intention to back our public sector workers.

The Government are making poor spending decisions that threaten to push our economy and public services to breaking point. I believe that the Government should give our key workers the pay rise they deserve.

I appreciate you taking the time to share with me the proposals the Council supports on strengthening the tracking and apprehension of stalkers and domestic abusers and for letting me know you have raised this issue directly with the Home Secretary.

Domestic abuse is not just physical violence. Coercive control plays a major role in domestic abuse and is often present in the form of controlling behaviour, high levels of control, stalking, isolation and economic abuse, forced marriage and honour-based violence, which are also key parts to domestic abuse. The impact of violence and controlling behaviour have long term devastating effects on someone's mental health.

As my colleague and Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee said at Report Stage of the Domestic Abuse Bill in July:

"We need to make sure that when the call comes in about domestic abuse by someone who has been convicted before for abuse against someone else, it is not just treated as a new or one-off offence. We need to ensure that there are systems in place to join up the dots to link police, probation and support services together and to monitor people who have a series of previous domestic abuse or stalking convictions so that if they start a new relationship, the police and local services know that a new family are at risk and can take action. Too often, that does not happen. Clare's law does not solve the problem because it relies on an

individual asking about an offender's history. What if they do not know to ask? What if they are too scared? Why is it still left to victims to ask for help, rather than having a proper system in place to monitor serial abusers and offenders? As Laura Richards points out,

"professionals load the victim up with actions and a safety plan and rarely do any multi-agency problem solving and risk management regarding the perpetrator."

New clause 32 calls on the Government properly to review the way in which serial abusers are monitored and managed, and to publish that review swiftly. New clause 33 sets out a stronger way to respond to serial abusers, by bringing them into the process for managing serious offenders—the multi-agency public protection arrangements, or MAPPAs—so that serial domestic abuse perpetrators and stalkers can be properly addressed. So far, the Government have resisted this.

Thank you again for taking the time to make me aware of the Council's December resolutions.

With best wishes

Debbie

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