

**NOTICE OF MOTION****GREEN GROUP****PROTECTING PUBLIC SERVICES**

“As a result of the economic troubles facing the UK, more and more people are turning to public services for support. However, in the context of current budget deficits, some commentators argue services are likely to experience real term budget cuts over the next decade. Making sure that vital front-line services which support the most vulnerable in our society have adequate funding is crucial to helping people across the UK weather the economic storm.

\* This council notes that the UK economy is experiencing grave difficulties:

- The overall unemployment rate in the UK in June reached a 12 year high of 7.2 per cent. (In Brighton & Hove more than 7000 people claimed Job Seekers Allowance in May 2009.)
- The Financial Service Authority found in the same month that house repossessions are up 62 per cent in the last year.
- The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in June revised down its forecast for the UK economy in 2009. It warns that the UK is in "a sharp recession" with output set to contract by 4.3 per cent in 2009, worse than its previous forecast of a 3.7 per cent fall.

\* Further, this council notes that periods of economic downturn often feature a rise in health, welfare and social problems, and that the more vulnerable members of society are likely to be disproportionately affected:

- 2008 saw 2.1million more prescriptions of antidepressants in England than in 2007.
- 66 per cent of Relate Centres (the UK's largest provider of relationship counselling) across the country have seen an increase in demand for their services.
- Shelter has seen a 250 per cent increase in the number of calls to its free helpline regarding mortgage arrears over the last year.
- The attorney general, Lady Scotland, has warned that domestic violence will rise with increased financial worries. (Rise, formerly known as the Women's Refuge Project in Brighton, says it is handling an average of about two dozen new referrals a month and the trend is up on last year.)

- Ministers have conceded that the recession will make it more difficult for the government to meet its pledge to end child poverty (1 in 5 children in Brighton and Hove are growing up in poverty).
- The Prime Minister has said: 'historically, in tough economic times, there has been a rise in crimes of violence and theft.'

\* Further, this council notes that

- Brighton and Hove is ranked as the 79th most deprived local authority in England - so falls within the most deprived 25 per cent of all authorities in England.
- 15 of the city's 164 'super output areas' (SOAs) fall within the 10 per cent most deprived SOAs in England, with 8 SOAs falling in the 5 per cent most deprived. Deprivation in the city is allied to health inequalities (particularly around mental health), drug, alcohol and substance misuse and child poverty.
- The city's most recent Local Government Finance Settlement (which funds nearly 50 per cent of the council's net budget) saw Brighton & Hove City Council receive the minimum increase each year, known as a "grant floor increase", which is likely to continue for many years ahead. The grant increase for 2009/10 is 1.75%, well below the national average increase for Unitary Councils of 3.4%.

\* Therefore this council resolves to request the Acting Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor, Alistair Darling MP and the Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne MP requesting that they:

- commit to protect funding for frontline public services
- take into consideration Brighton & Hove's unique problems in any future financial settlement decisions."

Proposed by: Cllr Paul Steedman

Seconded by: Cllr Amy Kennedy