

Subject:	A Basic Income Trial for Brighton and Hove - Items referred from the Council meeting held on the 22 October 2020		
Date of Meeting:	3 December 2020		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law		
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Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To receive the following petition for consideration which was debated at and referred from the Council meeting held on the 22 October 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee responds to the petition either by noting it or writing to the petition organiser setting out the Council's views, or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter which may give consideration to a range of options, including the following:

- taking the action requested in the petition
- considering the petition at a council meeting
- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- holding a meeting with petitioners
- calling a referendum

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The petition is detailed below:

A BASIC INCOME TRIAL FOR BRIGHTON AND HOVE

- 3.1.1 We the undersigned petition Brighton & Hove Council to support a basic income trial in the city and to write to the government to request that they look into the feasibility of a pilot in Brighton. We understand that not all councillors may have looked into this subject and so in this petition we are asking that:
- The petition is presented at full council and that councillors have time to debate the issue
 - The council considers joining the councils in Sheffield, Liverpool and Hull in backing the idea of a basic income trial in the city and votes whether to support the proposal
 - The council writes to the government in support of a basic income trial in Brighton and Hove.

Lead Petitioner – Maggie Gordon-Walker

Additional Information:

- 3.1.2 There have been a number of local groups in the UK that have formed over the past few years all with the aim of promoting the idea of basic income such as the UBI Labs in the North of England (Sheffield, Leeds, Liverpool, Kirklees etc.). We, Basic Income South East, have recently formed to continue the movement but with a focus on the South East of England, starting with Brighton and Hove.

Proponents of Basic Income argue it is the fairest way of sharing wealth and could guarantee minimum standards of living. They also argue it would dramatically reduce, if not eliminate poverty in the UK, improve the wellbeing of everyone and help the local economy. Every individual would receive regular payments from the government with no strings attached, taking away the conditionality that the current welfare system has. By covering everyone's basic needs, a basic income would enable them to have more stability and security in their lives and thrive rather than just survive. Recently we have seen evidence of the lack of security that many have through the coronavirus outbreak and with an increasingly unstable economic future, we feel it is better to support people with an upfront payment rather than dealing with any problems after they occur.

There have been several trials of basic income that have occurred including recently in Finland but also in Canada during the 1970s and other countries across the world such as Kenya and India. The UK government, however, has yet to support such a scheme in the UK, although the Scottish government have taken it upon themselves to investigate the practicalities of a pilot scheme and have been working on a feasibility study over the last few years. They will publish their results later this year, with the potential of a pilot happening north of the border. In last year's general election, the Green Party included basic income as a core part of their manifesto and were joined by the Labour Party who supported the idea of several trials across the UK. In addition, several local authorities have backed the idea of trials in their area including Sheffield (June 2019), Liverpool (2018) and Hull (Jan 2020).

- 3.2 An extract from the minutes of the council meeting held on the 22 October 2020 is detailed below for information:

COUNCIL

4.30pm 22 OCTOBER 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING - TEAMS

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Robins (Chair), Mears (Deputy Chair), Allcock, Appich, Atkinson, Bagaeen, Barnett, Bell, Brennan, Brown, Childs, Clare, Davis, Deane, Druitt, Ebel, Evans, Fishleigh, Fowler, Gibson, Grimshaw, Hamilton, Heley, Henry, Hill, Hills, Hugh-Jones, Janio, Knight, Lewry, Littman, Lloyd, Mac Cafferty, McNair, Miller, Moonan, Nemeth, Nield, O'Quinn, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Phillips, Pissaridou, Platts, Powell, Rainey, Shanks, Simson, C Theobald, Wares, West, Wilkinson and Williams.

PART ONE

43 PETITIONS FOR DEBATE.

(1) A BASIC INCOME TRIAL FOR BRIGHTON AND HOVE

- 43.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. He had been made aware of three such petitions and would take each in turn. However, he also noted that since the publication of the agenda the third petition, concerning the Brighton & Hove Greyhound Stadium had been withdrawn.
- 43.2 He noted that there was amendment to the cover reports' recommendation for the first petition which would be taken as part of the debate on the matter in question.
- 43.3 The Mayor then invited Ms. Gordon-Walker to present the petition concerning the introduction of a basic income trial in Brighton and Hove.
- 43.4 Ms. Gordon-Walker thanked the Mayor and stated that the petition which had been signed by 2,308 people was the first in the country to trigger a debate by a council on the matter. She noted that other councils had considered notice of motion that were seeking the ability for those authorities to be able to pilot a scheme and she hoped that Brighton & Hove would join them in requesting the Government to give them the ability to have a basic income trail in the city.
- 43.5 Councillor Druitt thanked Ms. Gordon-Walker for presenting the petition and noted that Universal Basic Income systems had been trialled in a number of countries and may offer some potential advantages over the current welfare benefits system. He felt that it would be interesting to understand how such a scheme could be designed to help to avoid current benefit poverty traps and help to address the growing inequality of earnings across the country. However, in supporting any trial, the council would wish to be assured that no-one would end up receiving less financial support than through the current benefit system, particularly disabled people. The system was also likely to require additional staffing resources and new systems in order to implement the scheme and process payments. Keeping the system simple for both people and administrators would be important to minimise costs. However, given the council's challenging financial situation, the council would wish to be assured that any government trial provides funding for the additional administrative burden placed on the council or partner authorities involved in any pilot.
- 43.6 Councillor Osborne moved an amendment on behalf of the Green Group which sought to enable a letter to be sent from the Chief Executive to the government registering the council's desire to be able to undertake a pilot scheme.
- 43.7 Councillor Gibson formally seconded the amendment.
- 43.8 Councillors Williams, McNair, Knight, Janio and Littman spoke on the petition and the amendment.

43.9 Councillor Gibson noted the comments and welcomed the amendment.

43.10 The Mayor thanked Ms. Gordon-Walker for joining the meeting and presenting the petition and noted that the amendment had been moved.

43.11 The Mayor then sought the Council's agreement to put the recommendations as amended to the vote which was agreed and he therefore called on each of the Group Leaders to confirm their position as well as the Groups in turn and each of the Independent Members:

Councillor Mac Cafferty stated that the Green Group were in favour of the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Green Group Members;

Councillor Platts stated that the Labour Group were in favour of the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Labour Group Members;

Councillor Bell stated that the Conservative were in against the recommendations as amended and this was confirmed by the Conservative Group Members;

Councillor Brennan confirmed that she was in favour of the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Fishleigh confirmed that she wished to abstain from voting on the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Janio confirmed that he was voting against the recommendations as amended;

Councillor Knight confirmed that she was voting in favour of the recommendations as amended.

43.12 The Mayor confirmed that the recommendations as amended had been carried.

43.13 **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the petition is noted and referred to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration;
- (2) That the Chief Executive be requested to write to the Chancellor expressing the council's support for a basic income pilot in the area and calling on the government to undertake a feasibility study to detail how best to implement a local basic income trial for the city; and
- (3) That in addition, to request that the Chief Executive includes the reply from the government in the Full Council papers after the reply is received.