

## Council – 6 December 2023

### Public Questions Pursuant to Standing Order No 7

#### Question from Fiona Wardle

Have seen a post on Facebook from Councillor Gosling that the Hardship Fund should be targeted at those earning below £25,000 per year. People on minimum wage get support by way of Universal Credit, where eligible, however us full time workers earning 28k get NO UC support.

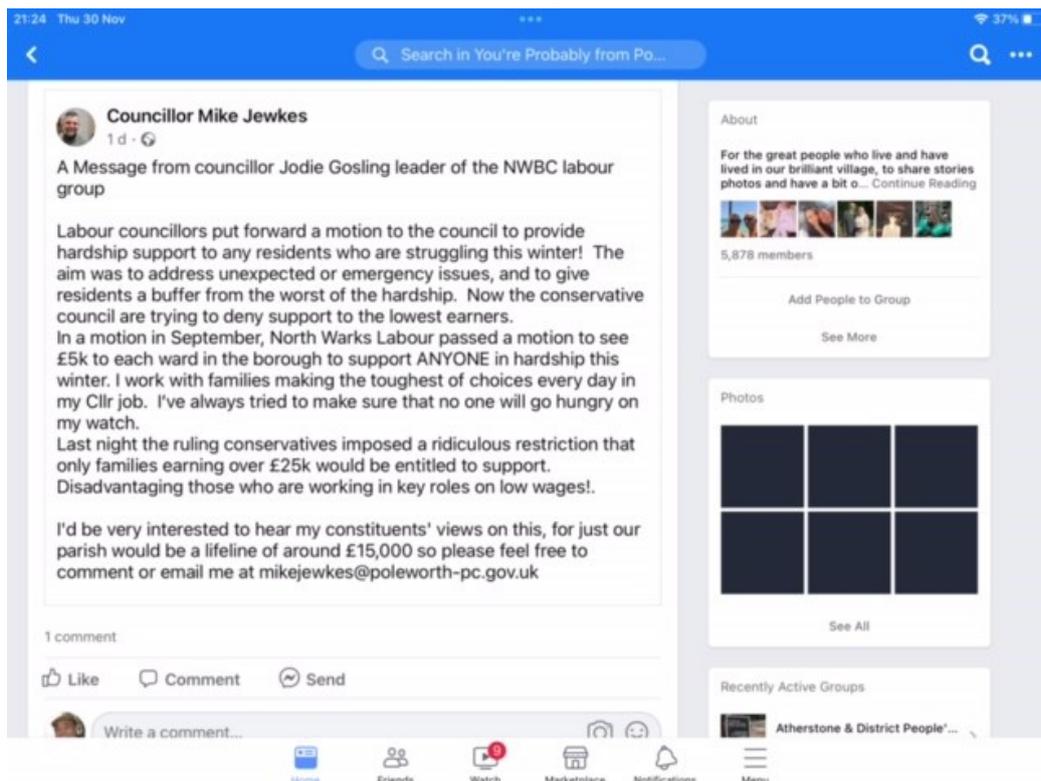
As we earn too much, we get no help with our bills, food shop, council tax, no boiler grants, no grants for household improvements, no help from any source etc, but those who claim UC to top up their wages get help with many many things listed above.

Those who claim UC have far more than people like me who work 40 hours, I have a partner who has had a stroke and was denied PIP and as he was self-employed he cannot claim UC. I'm struggling with not only my household running cost but keeping 2 adults on 28k ...so that equates to 14k each. So where's the hardship, certainly not with those on minimum wage.

So to put it in simple terms those on minimum wage are actually better off financially than I am earning 28k. Because claiming UC opens far more doors for them than it does us. So in this instance I am all for us working class earning 25k+ to be the ones who get help.

My question therefore is who is going to help us that earn just too much to claim UC, because are earning just over the threshold?

I look forward to your response.



## Question from Mike Jewkes

Good evening all, I think you all know me by now I have multiple interests in the wellbeing of constituents of north Warwickshire, as Polesworth parish councillor for Polesworth east, disability officer for north Warwickshire and Bedworth and as chair of my branch. Its not an empire Mr mayor however I will say it is a lot of people to whom I am avowed to do my utmost to assist

Imagine my dismay at what I saw on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November exec board to see a councillor from dordon agreeing to exclude the most vulnerable from a scheme set up to assist hardship after seeing on the county councils' own pages dordon is the most deprived area in our constituency. I wonder if they would like to explain to their food bank, food bank users and to the parents who are having to come and ask for help for their Christmas this year why only those earning over 25k can access this hardship funding.

My perspective on this is it should be a fund open to all who are in hardship, yes as you say there is other help, but also as stated at the exec board by cllr Jodie gosling if help is available elsewhere you must go there first. By dismissing those in the lower end of the spectrum TWICE you are attempting to flip flop and side step your responsibilities as councillors after all our jobs are to serve and represent everyone in the ward that you are elected to (and not just those who voted for you), along with bringing people together.

I hear day in day out from members of my community how difficult things are for them currently, mainly from the elderly and infirm, currently they are struggling to cook so I have a local business who has offered to assist if I can get access to our community rooms in monument view and paddocks close, they are even willing to deliver. No one is ever excluded from these projects as is the case of food banks and any other hardship resolution we can come up with in our areas. The problem is we constantly have to fight for access to the community rooms in polesworth and still can't even with such a community-oriented project, So I am now asking you to please help us here too I live next to the one in monument view, it is currently used for 2 hrs on a Thursday for bingo none of those who pay a subsidy in my block are able to use it due to our ages BUT there is a need whereby we could USE A COMMUNITY ROOM FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS and constantly we hit a brick wall.

Also do the right thing and Remove this 25k floor on assistance and encourage all including those on such salaries to join the community projects, this way we can help in both the general health and wellbeing of our communities but also remove the social isolation many suffer at this time of year and build proper community cohesion which in part after all is why we are councillors.

## *Index of Multiple Deprivation*

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas (or neighbourhoods) in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks every small area (LSOA) in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

Within the table below, decile 1 represents the most deprived 10% of LSOAs in England while decile 10 shows the least deprived 10% of areas.

More information on IMD can be found here

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

The table and map below show the decile for each LSOA within Polesworth JSNA area.

LSOA Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Decile (2019) Income Decile (2019) Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) Decile (2019) Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) Decile (2019)

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baddesley Ensor West                        | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Grendon, Bradley Green & Whittington        | 6 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| Baddesley Common, Baxterley & Merevale      | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| Dordon Rural                                | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Dordon Village                              | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| Warton & Shuttington                        | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Newton Regis, Austrey & Seckington          | 9 | 8 | 8 | 7 |
| Polesworth East - St. Helena                | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Polesworth East - Station                   | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| Polesworth West - School                    | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| Polesworth West - Birchmoor & Pooley Fields | 8 | 7 | 6 | 7 |

[JSNA\\_Deprivation\\_2019\\_RB2 | Polesworth | Report Builder for ArcGIS \(warwickshire.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Response from Councillor David Wright**

I would like to thank both Ms Wardle and Councillor Jewkes for their questions.

Clearly this is an issue that we are going to debate later in the agenda and the questions are therefore timely, but also very interesting.

It is clear that there is more than just the view that we should target all of our support schemes to those in receipt of benefits. Our view that we should not with regard to this scheme is not, as it has been portrayed, specifically ignoring those in that category but a reflection that those not in receipt of benefits also need support, as very clearly set out by Ms Wardle.

The Hardship Scheme is not the totality of the support available to residents nor does it represent all the work the Council does with its partners on the issue of cost of living pressures. The Hardship Fund is a very small amount of funding and therefore needs to be targeted, as with all finite schemes or budgets. Targeting it to one group is not being 'anti' any other group. Our Officers' view is that other support can continue to be offered to those in receipt of benefits, such that we can target this particular fund to other groups.

As an example of this work across all groups, the Government last week invited Integrated Care Boards working with Council partners to bid for funding under the 'WorkWell scheme' which seeks to help those with health conditions remain or return to the workplace. This scheme is very important given that being in work improves health, living standards and wellbeing, and reduces poverty. The Chief Executive has written to the ICB and County Council (as the eligible applicants) asking them to make a bid given the relatively high levels of people in North Warwickshire who cannot currently work due to health issues. The Government have allocated £2 billion for this wider work nationally, with £57 million being made available in the first phase of the WorkWell scheme in 15 areas. That level of support very significantly outweighs the funding available in the Hardship scheme.