

Notice of Motion – Public Health Funding

Councillor P Robinson has submitted the following motion:

“The public health grant funds vital services and functions that prevent ill health and contribute to the future sustainability of the NHS. Local authorities are responsible for delivering most of these services, but their ability to do so is compromised by public health grant reductions and the broader funding climate.

In 2018/19 and 2019/20 every local authority will have less to spend on public health than the year before. Taking funds away from prevention is a false economy. Without proper investment in public health people suffer, demand on local health services increases and the economy suffers. Poor public health costs local businesses heavily through sick days and lost productivity. Unless we restore public health funding, our health and care system will remain locked in a ‘treatment’ approach, which is neither economically viable nor protects the health of residents.

The Government is looking to phase out the Public Health Grant by 2020/21. Thereafter, they plan to fund public health via 75% business rates retention. Whatever the model, it is vital that local authorities have enough funding to deliver the functions and services they need to provide. Deprived areas often suffer the worst health outcomes, so it is also vital that areas with the greatest need receive sufficient funding to meet their local challenges.

This Council notes that around four in ten cancers are preventable, largely through avoidable risk factors, such as stopping smoking, keeping a healthy weight and cutting back on alcohol. In addition, in Barking and Dagenham we have the highest rate of death from cancer considered preventable in London. Smoking accounts for 80,000 early deaths every year and remains the largest preventable cause of cancer in the world. Smoking-related ill health costs local authorities £760 million every year in social care costs. Additionally, obesity and alcohol account for 30,000 and 7,000 early deaths each year respectively. All three increase the risk of: cancer, diabetes, lung and heart conditions, poor mental health and create a subsequent burden on health and social care.

This Council believes that the impact of cuts to public health on our communities is becoming difficult to ignore. This case becomes more pressing given the Government’s consideration of a 10-year plan for the NHS. For this reason, we support Cancer Research UK’s call for increased and sustainable public health funding.

This Council calls on the Government to deliver increased investment in public health and to support a sustainable health and social care system by taking a ‘prevention first’ approach. In turn, Barking & Dagenham Council will continue to support and fund public health initiatives to the best of our abilities - to prevent ill-health, reduce inequalities and support a health and social care system that is fit for the future.”