Item 16 - MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 11

Motion 1

Councillor Sarah Nelmes, seconded by Councillor Paul Rainbow to move under Notice duly given as follows:

This Council notes the Elections Bill currently working through parliament which, in its current form and among other provisions, would require voters to show photographic ID at polling stations.

This Council further notes the costs of the new measures are estimated by government to be £8.5m a year, and the cross-party Local Government Association have noted the serious capacity and resilience implications for councils, including the risk that identity checks and the possible refusal of votes may make election staff recruitment even harder than it is already.

This Council believes the proposals requiring photographic ID are a sledgehammer to crack a nut.  Enquiries show there have been no cases of suspected electoral fraud in Three Rivers which have required any form of investigation during at least the past five years, and none are known before that.  In 2019, nationally and across Local, European, Parliamentary and Mayoral elections, 58 million votes were cast.  Of these, there were 33 allegations of impersonation which resulted in one conviction and one caution for people casting votes illegally.  Most years are similar, and the Electoral Reform Society have branded this “an expensive distraction”, highlighting the way this would act as a barrier to voting for already disadvantaged groups.

This council believes the Voter ID proposals will only serve to add barriers for those already least likely to vote and that the resources needed for these proposals to be implemented would be better spent promoting voter registration and encouraging voting across all communities.

This council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to our three local Members of Parliament, noting our opposition to the Voter ID provisions, and asking them to support any amendments to the Bill which would remove these provisions, and to focus instead on promoting voter registration and actually voting, in the interests of ensuring higher participation rates in our already safe and secure elections system.

Motion 2

Councillor Stephen Cox, seconded by Councillor Joan King to move under Notice duly given the amended motion as follows:

This Council notes the impending cost-of-living crisis which will adversely affect all Three Rivers residents across the board.

This Council:

(a) believes that we are facing a cost-of-living crisis, with rising bills and ballooning prices;

(b) notes that we have seen a decade of low growth under Conservative- led governments, and believes that this is holding back Britain and has left the national economy weakened and unable to deal with shocks;

(c) notes that this is particularly felt in less well-off areas leaving many residents acutely vulnerable to a worrying combination of factors – such as inflation, rocketing energy bills, increased costs for food and fuel, and the forthcoming rise to national insurance;

(d) notes that a Labour government would immediately cut VAT on domestic energy bills to ease the burden on households during winter – giving a potential saving of up to £400 for many Three Rivers residents – which would be paid for by a one-off windfall tax on booming oil and gas profits;

(e) believes that we need radical long-term change to keep energy bills low in the future, and yet this Government have consistently failed to keep in check rising energy bills and have a very poor record on insulating homes and improving energy efficiency;

(f) believes the Government should get a grip and tackle this crisis;

This Council resolves to will write urgently to the local MPs and the Prime Minister calling for the Government to cut VAT on household energy bills this winter, scrap the planned rise in National Insurance in April noting it is a broken Conservative manifesto promise and urging it to do far more to better insulate homes and improve energy efficiency.