

1 March 2024

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Letter sent by email to: CEU.Enquiries@hmtreasury.gov.uk

Dear Chancellor,

Bury Council has just approved its budget for the next 12 months as part of our three-year medium term financial plan. It confirms that there will be a funding gap of £30m over the next 3 years. After our huge efforts over the years of managing real-term cuts to our funding, the only available options are to continue to deplete our reserves and to cut services – and we simply cannot go on like this.

The funding disparity for Bury has always been unfair, but it is now unsustainable. The IFS puts Bury in the bottom 20% worst-funded councils. We are also being hit by a 'triple whammy' of inadequate funding, huge increases in costs, and ever-increasing demand for services – particularly in adults' and children's social care, which accounts for three quarters of our budget.

Because of this, the Council launched its Let's Fix It Together campaign - with over 1500 Bury residents signing our petition. We're playing our part, by seeking to boost economic growth with our regeneration plans and investing in neighbourhood working to deliver an early intervention and prevention model. Our residents are doing their bit, by working with us to make life better across Bury by recycling more, becoming foster carers and volunteering. Alongside all these efforts we now need the government to give Bury a better funding deal. Let's Fix It Together calls upon the government to urgently review our funding so that it is fair, protects vital public services and helps us to better plan and ensure money is directed to the areas that need it the most.

Whilst the extra money announced last month was welcome, it will not come anywhere close to what is needed to prevent further cuts in the coming years. Concerningly, the IFS forecasts that the worst is yet to come, with the real pain for Council's coming from 2025-2026 onwards – which is why we are calling on the government to act now.

Bury Council has had to find £150m of savings since 2010. In real terms, our core spending power has been reduced by 29%. While careful planning means we are still able to set a balanced budget for 2024/25 – who knows what will happen in future years if the government fails to act and doesn't give Bury the fair deal it deserves.

The Council also calls on government to extend the Household Support Fund (HSF) that makes a vital difference to thousands of our vulnerable residents. While I understand it was intended to be time limited, the cost of living crisis continues and the fund has successfully alleviated poverty, hardship and provided emergency assistance.

The Spring Budget is a chance to acknowledge the vital role that local government plays in places like Bury. I hope you will not let this opportunity go to waste.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E O'Brien", written in a cursive style.

Cllr Eamonn O'Brien
Leader of Bury Council