

Supporting Universal Basic Income

Motion proposed by Tim Dant, Seconded by Jason Wood and Joanna Young

To be submitted for consideration at Lancaster Full Council, 16th December 2020

Preamble

A Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a non-means-tested payment to cover the basic cost of living that is paid by the state equally to all citizens individually, regardless of employment status, wealth, or marital status. UBI has been widely debated over the last thirty odd years, most recently in the UK parliament on 13th October 2020¹, and research has involved a number of pilot projects around the world.² Advocates have recently argued that it is the fairest, most effective way to mitigate the effects of coronavirus on people's incomes. A network of Universal Basic Income Labs has been set up to work with local authorities and other organisations across the UK to develop UBI proposals.³ The design of UBI pilot studies aims to address problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and environmental damage, both in the long-term and immediately in relation to coronavirus.

UBI has the potential to address key challenges such as inequality, poverty, precarious employment, loss of community, and climate change, by:

- Giving employers a more flexible workforce whilst giving employees greater freedom to change their jobs;
- Valuing unpaid work, such as caring for family members and voluntary work;
- Removing the negative impacts, including detrimental health effects, of benefit sanctions and rules;
- Giving people more equal resources within the family, workplace and society;
- Breaking the link between work and consumption, thus helping reduce the strain on the environment;
- Boosting community wealth building while enabling greater opportunities for people to work in community and cultural activities or to train or reskill in areas that will be needed to transition to a lower-carbon economy.

Motion

This Council believes that everyone in society should be able to afford the basics. No one should be left in destitution or forced to use a foodbank and so, **this Council resolves:**

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1. To join the network of UBI Labs and seek Government support for a UBI pilot study in the District.

2. That the Chief Executive write on behalf of Lancaster City Council to: the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister, and the leaders of all political parties in parliament, all Lancaster MPs, and to Lancashire County Council saying the following:
 - a. That the current benefit system, in particular Universal Credit, is failing Lancaster District citizens and causing serious financial hardship and debt;
 - b. The Covid-19 crisis has increased the numbers of people facing poverty⁴ which, without adequate government support for local communities, will continue to increase.
 - c. Given its history of social innovation, wealth of expertise, and active networks across community, business and public services, Lancaster is ideally placed to pilot a UBI.
 - d. The success of a UBI pilot should not be measured only by impact upon take-up of paid work, but also the impact upon communities and what the people within them do, how they feel, and how they relate to others and the environment around them.

OFFICER BRIEFING NOTE

A number of Councils have already adopted similar motions. The resource implications at this early stage are minimal. It is entirely for Lancaster City Council to decide whether it wishes to support this motion.

MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

¹ <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2020-0096/>

² Standing, Guy (2017) Basic Income: And how we can make it happen, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, pp: 249-278; Lowery, Annie (2018) Give People Money: How a Universal Income would end Poverty, revolutionize work, and remake the world, Penguin Random House.

³ <https://www.ubilabnetwork.org/> The network began in Sheffield and a number of other local authorities have passed motions such as this one including: Liverpool, Leeds, Hull, Kirklees, York, Norwich, Leeds, Lewes, Newry, Mourne and Down, Derry City and Strabane.

⁴ See:

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157095/subreports/cc_time_series/report.aspx?

Online resources on UBI:

<https://www.basicincome.org.uk/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_basic_income_in_the_United_Kingdom

<https://citizensincome.org/>

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/basic-income-could-virtually-eliminate-poverty-in-the-united-kingdom-at-a-cost-of-67-billion-per-year/>

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